3 SPECTACULAR D&D ADVENTURES

DUNGEON®

ISSUE 116 · NOVEMBER 2004

30 GREATEST ADVENTURES OF ALL TIME

100% OFFICIAL CONTENT

Dungeons & Dragons

0 74808 01825 3 11
U.S. $6.99 | CAN $9.99

DOWNER: THE STORY SO FAR · PSYCHOTIC PSIONICS
FATAL FINALE: THE LAST ADVENTURE PATH
NEW COLUMNS BY WIL WHEATON AND MONTE COOK

ISSUE #116 NOVEMBER 2004 VOLUME 18, NO 11

DUNGEON

www.paizo.com/dungeon

Publisher: **Lisa Stevens**
Editor-in-Chief: **Erik Mona**
Art Director: **Sean Glenn**
Associate Art Director: **Mike Schley**
Associate Editor: **James Jacobs**
Graphic Designer: **Sarah Robinson**
Editorial Assistant: **Jeremy Walker**
Advertising Sales Director: **Rob Stewart**
Production Director: **Jeff Alvarez**
Prepress Manager: **Kelly O'Brien**
Circulation Manager: **Keith Strohm**

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Atilla Adorjany, Peter Bergting, Jeff Carlisle, Ben Huen, Kyle Stanley Hunter, Eric Kim, Robert Lazzaretti, Tony Mosley, Marc Sasso, Stan Shaw, Chris Stevens, Dave Studer, Christopher West

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Russell Brown, Frank Brunner, Monte Cook, Tim Hitchcock, Dawn Ibach, Phillip Larwood, Mike Mearls, Christopher Perkins, Wil Wheaton

PAIZO PUBLISHING, LLC
2700 Richards Road, Suite 201
Bellevue, WA 98005-4200

Chief Executive Officer: **Lisa Stevens**
Chief Operating Officer: **Keith Strohm**
Director of Marketing: **Jenny Bendel**
Corporate Accountant: **Dave Erickson**
Technical Director: **Vic Wertz**
Operations Manager: **Jeff Alvarez**
Webmaster: **Robert Head**

Dungeon November 2004, Volume 18, Number 11 (ISSN# 0890-7102/USPS 0002-005) is published monthly by Paizo Publishing, LLC, 2700 Richards Road, Suite 201, Bellevue, WA 98005-4200, United States of America. Periodicals Postage Paid at Bellevue, WA 98009-9998 and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Dungeon, Paizo Publishing LLC, 2700 Richards Road, Suite 201, Bellevue, WA 98005-4200.

No part of this magazine may be reproduced (except for review purposes) without the prior written consent of the publisher. Material published herein does not necessarily reflect the opinions of Paizo Publishing, LLC, its employees, or its editorial staff, who are not liable for opinions expressed herein. Most product names are trademarks owned by the companies that publish those products. Use of the name of any product without mention of trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status. Trademarks related to the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS brand, including DRAGON, DUNGEON, and D&D are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and are used under license from Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a division of Hasbro, Inc.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO
Paizo Publishing, 2700 Richards Road, Suite 201, Bellevue, WA 98005-4200.

©2004 Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

BACK ISSUES: **www.paizo.com** or call 425-289-1340

SUBSCRIPTIONS/CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Contact Paizo Publishing at **subscriptions@paizo.com** or call 425-289-0060.

Although we accept subscriptions to prison addresses, delivery is subject to the discretion and/or whim of prison personnel. If you have not received a magazine or premium, please consult with your Mail Room authorities. This publisher is not responsible for non-delivery.

ADVERTISING: Contact DUNGEON's Advertising Director, Rob Stewart, at (425) 289-1345. All ads are subject to approval by Paizo Publishing, LLC, which reserves the right to reject any ad for any reason. Advertisers and/or agencies of advertisers agree not to hold Paizo Publishing, LLC liable for any loss or expense from alleged wrongdoing that may arise out of the publication of such advertisements.

DISTRIBUTION: National and international distribution is provided by Curtis Circulation Company, 730 River Road, New Milford, NJ 07646. Tel: (201) 634-7400. Fax: (201) 634-7499.

OPEN GAME CONTENT: Unless otherwise noted, this Paizo Publishing, LLC product contains no Open Game Content. No portion of this work may be reproduced in any form without permission. To learn more about the Open Gaming License and the d20 System License, please visit **www.wizards.com/d20**.

Printed in the U.S.A.

SPECIAL FEATURE

68 THE 30 GREATEST D&D ADVENTURES OF ALL TIME
Our expert panel ranks the best D&D adventures of the game's first 30 years.

ADVENTURES

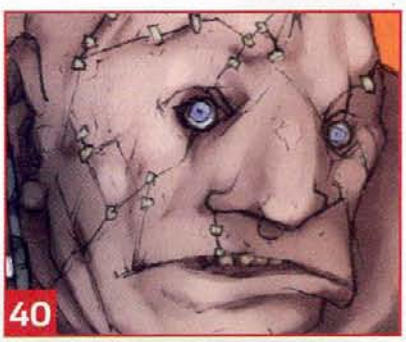
18 PALACE OF THE TWISTED KING
Phillip Larwood
A blistering sandstorm finally breaks, revealing a moribund ruin long shrouded by the desert sands. Its crumbling walls might provide respite from the terrible winds, but the keep's ancient meenlock master has a special bed for visitors—his grisly operating table! A D&D adventure for 5th-level characters.

26 DEATH OF LASHIMIRE
Tim Hitchcock
The infamous psion Lashimire is dead, leaving an undefended fortress ripe for looting. But the PCs soon discover that they aren't the only ones after Lashimire's treasure when they begin to encounter bands of githyanki in search of a missing *silver sword*. A D&D psionics adventure for 12th-level characters.

40 ASYLUM
Christopher Perkins
In the final chapter of the Shackled City Adventure Path, the heroes abandon the Material Plane to seek out a demon prince imprisoned in a bizarre asylum on the Prison Plane of Carceri. There they do battle with surviving Cagewrights, duplicitous demodands, and the mad Adimarchus himself. A D&D Shackled City Adventure Path scenario for 19th-level characters.

64 BONUS:

FACES OF CAULDRON
Jeff Carlisle
One of our favorite artists shows off the darker side of the Shackled City Adventure Path with an amazing two-page illustration of the villains of Cauldron.



ON THE COVER

Sculptor Dave Studer brings the *Tomb of Horrors* to three blasphemous dimensions with this rendition of the classic killer dungeon's infamous Great Green Devil Face, originally depicted by seminal DUNGEONS & DRAGONS artist Erol Otus.

CARTOONS

39 The Portent
59 Mt. Zogon
94 Downer

COLUMNS

6 Editorial
10 Prison Mail
82 Dungeoncraft
98 Wil Save

CAMPAIGN WORKBOOK

86 The Cast
88 The City
90 The Dungeon
92 The Journey

"Deep in the primaeval swamps of Lake Gloomey, shrouded in perpetual mists, lies the city of The Brothers of the Swamp. For years past this "religious" order has delved into the forbidden areas of study and determined that animals have more potential to populate the world than man, who was, after all, a biological abomination which would ultimately threaten the existence of all life."

— Dave Arneson
"The Temple of the Frog"

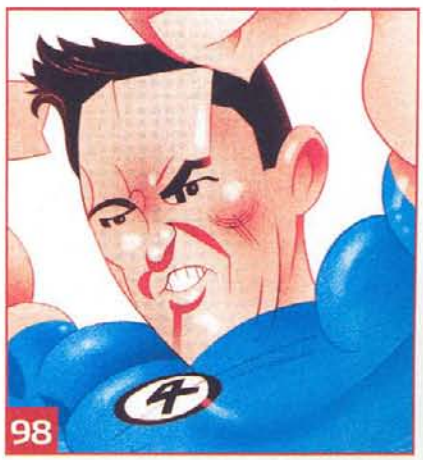
DUNGEON ADVENTURE PLAYER REWARDS!

Take advantage of the RPGA'S PLAYER REWARDS program by scoring points with the adventures from this issue of *DUNGEON*! Each adventure is worth 2 D&D Player Rewards points, and remains active until 12/30/04.

RPGA NETWORK

Drop by www.rpga.com for more details, and use the following adventure codes:

Palace of the Twisted King (116PTDN)
Death of Lashimire (116DLDN)
Asylum (116ASDN)



OLD ADVENTURES, NEW ADVENTURE PATH

This issue contains two milestones. The first is our cover feature, the "30 Greatest D&D Adventures of All Time." In this latest entry in our year-long celebration of the 30th anniversary of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS roleplaying game, we invited more than a dozen of the most well-known names in the D&D business (past and present) to rank the best adventures of the game's first 30 years. Long-time fans of the game should recognize our cover image as the gaping maw of the Face of the Great Green Devil, whose *sphere of annihilation* mouth has gobbled up thousands of player characters since its deadly debut in 1978's *Tomb of Horrors*. Younger gamers who have yet to experience the thrilling (often arbitrary) deadliness of Gary Gygax's legendary dungeon can use the "30 Greatest" article as a pointer to the *Tomb* and dozens of other classic adventures from D&D's illustrious past. Those of us who have been rolling dice for ages will see several old friends on the list, as well as a few up-and-coming whipper-snappers.

By far the best aspect of the old first edition era was the sense of shared experience. Before TSR segregated its audience by introducing a passel of campaign settings, and before second edition came along with its "modern" emphasis on storytelling and character development, adventures were the meat and potatoes of the D&D experience. To this day at conventions and Internet messageboards around the world, fans of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS talk about their favorite D&D memories, and favorite adventures are a common topic of discussion.

Sure, the game's come a long way since the 1970s, and some of the "greatest" adventures on our list seem somehow primitive compared to the bright new epics coming out from Wizards of the Coast and a host of third-party publishers producing products compatible with DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. But there's something primal about those early adventures. Sure, nostalgia has a lot to do with it, as does the fact that so many of the all-time greats were the "first" to do something. *Pharaoh* was the first official deathtrap pyramid. *In the Dungeons of the Slavelords* was the first adventure to capture the party and set them loose essentially naked at the bottom of the dungeon. But I think there's more to it than that.

The best of the classic adventures provide a setting for the type of high adventure suggested by the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS rules themselves (regardless of edition). No matter whether you play a hard-core hack-and-slash campaign or a romantic epic of high political intrigue, fighters are built to kill monsters, and clerics use their holy might to turn away undead. At its core, D&D is a game about killing monsters, stealing their treasure, and using that treasure to go shopping. You can add politics and morality and character on top of that, but you can't really escape that essential truth. And the old adventures—often the best adventures—simply provide an interesting atmosphere and setting that bolsters this essence of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game.

That's not to say that the designers of today haven't figured out how to put together adventures that equal the fun and excitement of the Great Old Ones. A handful of recent scenarios appear on the "30 Greatest" list, speeding through the "test of time" criteria to become modern-day classics. Thirty years from today, it's possible the list will be dominated by adventures from the current edition.

If so, I hope the game celebrity panel of the future takes a serious look at the Shackled City Adventure Path, which has appeared in these pages over the course of the last two years. The brainchild of former *DUNGEON* Editor-in-Chief Chris Thomasson, this 11-installment campaign has served as the creative backbone of the magazine since Chris's tenure, and has quickly become a favorite of many of our readers. This issue's high-level adventure, "Asylum," concludes the series in epic style with the same author that started it all back in *DUNGEON* #97—Christopher Perkins, also a former *DUNGEON* editor-in-chief. Congratulations are due to all the authors of the Shackled City Adventure Path: the two Chrises, our own James Jacobs, Tito Leati, David Noonan, and Jesse Decker, many of whom pulled double-duty to provide two or more installments. I think the Shackled City Adventure Path sets a very high bar for a multi-adventure campaign, and thank the authors for their incredible work. It's been a real pleasure having them in the pages of *DUNGEON*.

How do we top the Shackled City? Plans are currently in motion for a second *DUNGEON* Adventure Path, this time to feature no fewer than 20 complete D&D adventures, one for each level of play. Look for a more wide-ranging storyline that takes the characters from a humble village to a metropolis of wizards and thieves to a great inland sea and the undead horrors that lurk on its distant shores. Prepare your players for dangers like they have never known. For in 2005, *DUNGEON* begins a new Adventure Path: The Age of Worms.

Tell your players to keep 4d6 handy.

ERIK

Erik Mona
DUNGEON Editor-in-Chief
erik.mona@paizo.com

Palace of the Twisted King

by Phillip Larwood • Illustrations by Marc Sasso • Cartography by Robert Lazzaretti

Any Setting • Low-level (1–5) • Warm Desert & Dungeon Crawl

"Vast gulfs of sand stretch as far as the eye could hope to see. Yet beyond these lands are the lands of men, and it is there that I shall someday rule. For now, the tunnels below this ruin must suffice. I wait for your visit, for I shall prey on you when you sleep. Those who I judge false are for the larder and my dinner plate. Those I deem worthy shall offer up their flesh to me as clay to the sculptor. Soon, you shall all serve me. Soon, you shall all be children of the Twisted King."
—Fragmentary journal entry found in the Bright Desert

"Palace of the Twisted King" is a short DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure suitable for four 5th-level characters. Although set in a desert, it can be modified to suit any terrain that is relatively unsettled, since the majority of this adventure takes place inside a ruined way station. Naturally, if you change the terrain, you'll need to change the sandstorm into something more appropriate, like a hurricane, blizzard, or the like.

Adventure Background

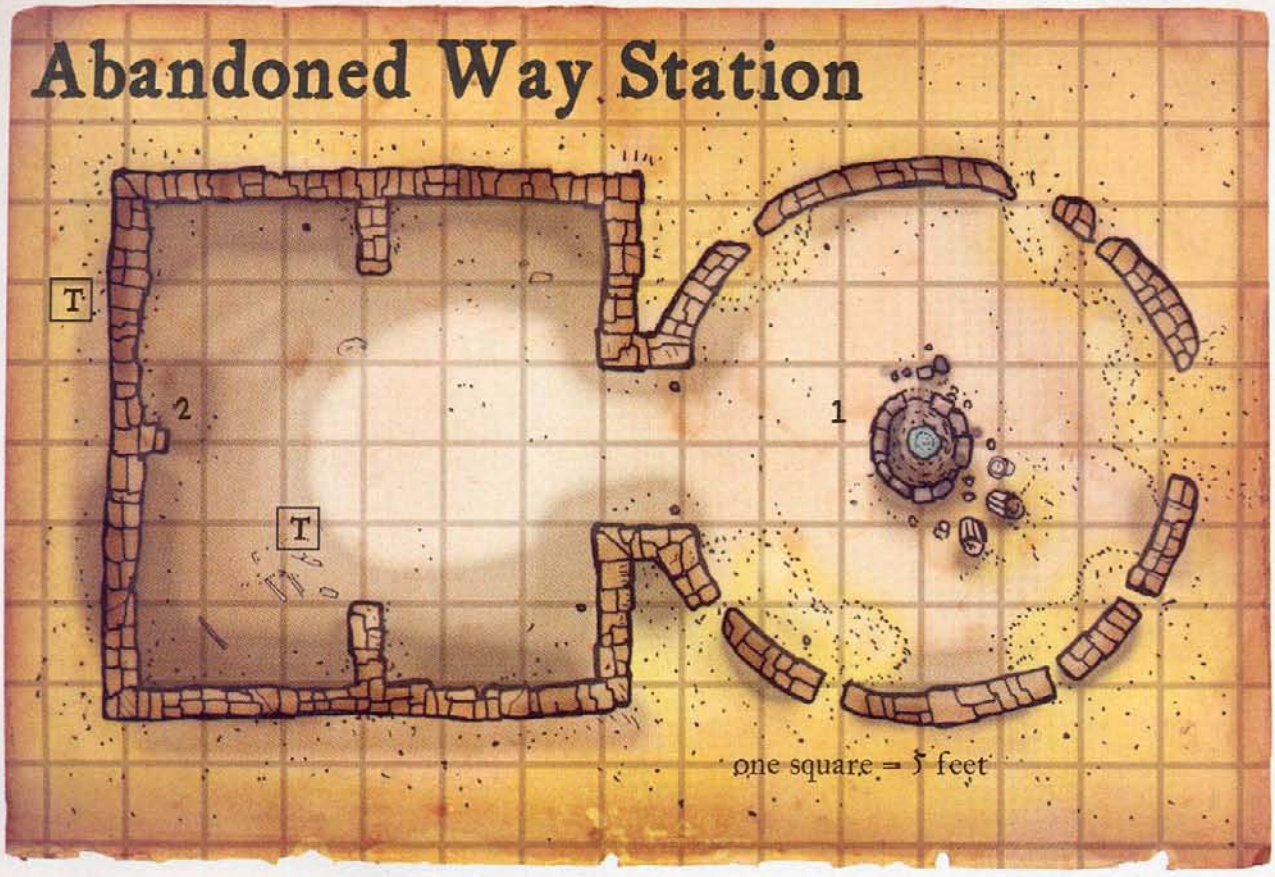
For many seasons, a gang of brigands used an abandoned way station in the desert to ambush passing caravans. The leader of these brigands was a vain and arrogant halfling sorcerer named Falariss Sulkisimar who was obsessed with one day founding his own kingdom. Unfortunately, Falariss had the misfortune of attacking a particularly treasure-laden caravan one day. This caravan's contents were being delivered to a powerful evil sorcerer and merchant lord named Ezorath. When the caravan failed to reach its destination, Ezorath was both embarrassed and enraged. In ruthless style, he responded to the affront by hunting the bandits down and wiping them out. He saved his most terrible punishment for Falariss, and used *polymorph any object* to transform the halfling into a horrible deformed monster called a meenlock. Ezorath intended to use the transformed Falariss as a guardian in his lair, but the newly-transformed meenlock fled into the storage tunnels located beneath the way station. Ezorath had neither the patience nor the interest to chase a meenlock through narrow tunnels, so he gathered up his recovered treasures and returned to his home.

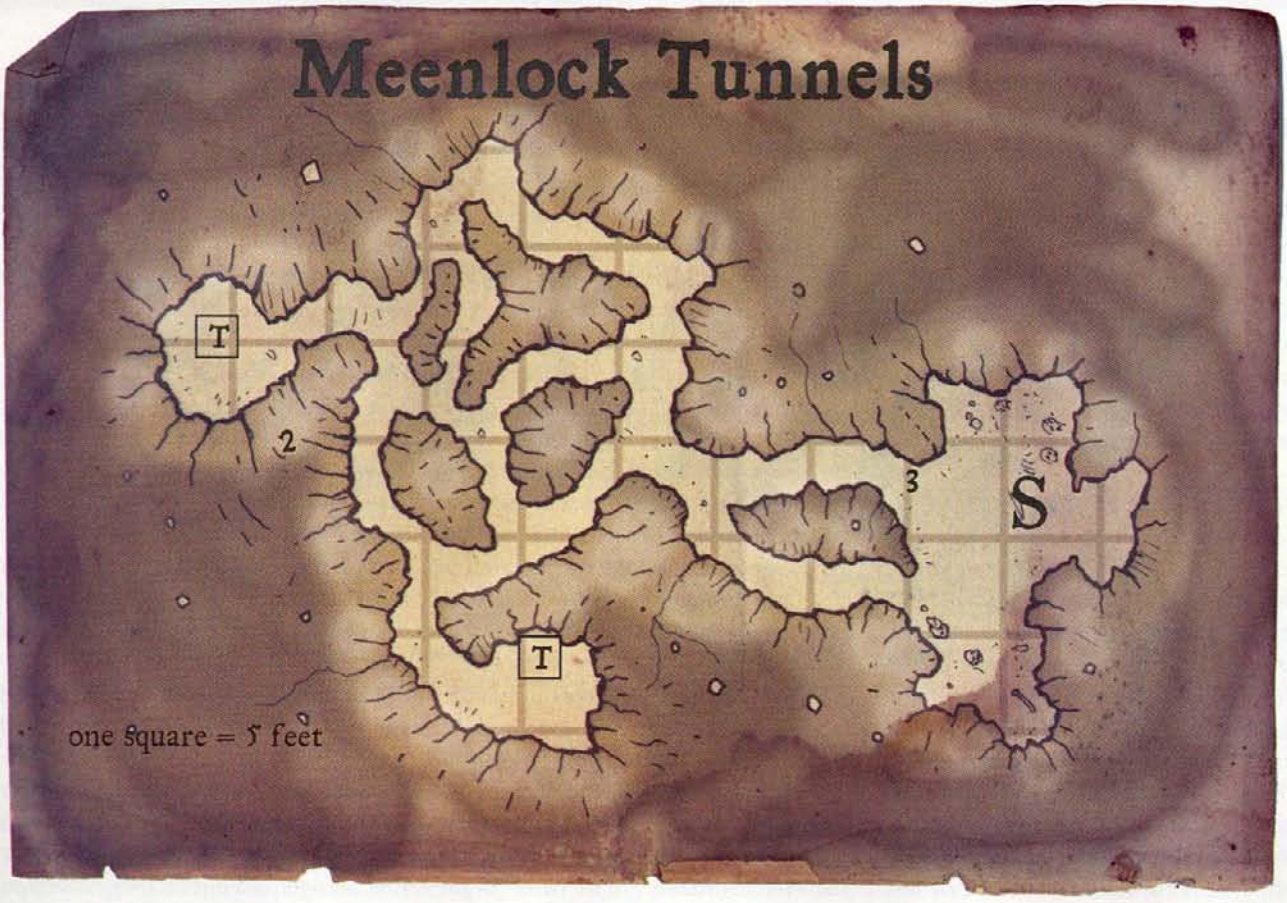
In the years since his transformation, Falariss has regained some measure of his arcane power and has managed to capture several passing travelers, transforming them into meenlocks as well. Falariss eventually forgot his prior life and even his name, but he never forgot his desire to rule a kingdom. He now calls himself the Twisted King, and he and his meenlock subjects haunt the way station, ambushing and transforming those who stay there and slowly expanding the monstrous population of his twisted kingdom.

Adventure Hooks

The adventure begins as the PCs seek shelter in the abandoned way station that doubles as Falariss' aberrant kingdom. They may simply seek shelter there as they travel, or the way station itself may be their destination. Several possible hooks to get the party to travel into the desert are detailed here; choose one appropriate for your campaign.

The Infamous Bandit: One of the PCs comes across an old parchment used as a bookmark in a forgotten tone. The parchment turns out to have a short story on it about an infamous halfling bandit named Falariss. The story tells of how Falariss operated out of a way station in


Abandoned Way Station
T
2
T
1
one square = 5 feet


Meenlock Tunnels
T
2
3
S
T
one square = 5 feet

the desert, and more to the point, tells of his vast successes in raiding caravans and travelers. According to the tale, a mighty hoard is hidden somewhere in the way station, just waiting for adventurers to find it. The parchment also shows the way station's location, about two days' travel into a large desert.

The Missing Merchant: Someone's gone missing in the desert! A merchant by the name of Yerrin Andrak recently traveled into the desert, seeking to establish trade with the nomads that live there. Yerrin, unfortunately, has yet to return, and his friends and family approach the PCs with a request to track him down and find out what may have become of him.

In Search of Ezorath's Tomb: The great wizard Ezorath died many decades ago, but tales say his followers buried him in a trap-filled tomb somewhere in the desert, along with several of his more powerful magic items. No one's been able to find any evidence of this tomb, but perhaps one of the PCs comes across a brief mention of Ezorath's mysterious journey into the desert a few years before his death, a trip to an old, abandoned way tower found on a relatively unused trade route. Perhaps a clue to the location of his tomb can be found there?

Shelter from the Storm: The PCs are traveling through the desert for an entirely different reason. During their travel, they notice an ominous dark wall of clouds coming up behind them; a massive sandstorm is quickly bearing down on the group! Fortunately, a small, ruined way station up ahead seems to offer shelter, if the PCs can only reach it before the sandstorm hits. If you're using one of the above hooks, you can include this sandstorm as a way to ensure the PCs seek shelter in the ruined waystation. Sandstorms are detailed on page 91 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.

The actual journey into the desert to the way station isn't covered here, allowing you to tailor the trip as you wish to fit your campaign. In the WORLD OF GREYHAWK, the desert could be the Bright Desert. In the FORGOTTEN REALMS, it could be Anauroch. In EBERRON, it might be the Blade Desert.

The Abandoned Way Station

Beyond a dune of white shifting sand, the burning desolation of the desert is broken by an astonishing ruin. Wildly canted walls lean inward toward several ruined structures, providing some shelter from the elements. Within, only one building seems to still stand whole. The building is in a bad state of repair, with several jagged holes piercing the walls and large portions of the roof caved in. It appears as if the ruin has long been abandoned, and there is no sign of any activity nearby or within.

Originally built by a kingdom that borders the desert, this way station saw a great deal of use until the trade route dried up and it was abandoned. Now it is home for the Twisted King and his servants.

Since meenlocks loathe the sun, you should try to stage the party's arrival at the way station at dusk. If you include the sudden sandstorm adventure hook, they'll have even more reason to seek out shelter in the way station.

The aboveground portions of the ruins are constructed of red clay brick. Sand piles up along the walls and on the roof of the building, in places to a depth of 3 feet. The damage to the walls is extensive. An examination of this damage combined with a successful DC 15 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check indicates that the PC notices that much of the damage seems to have been caused by powerful magic or even siege engines. In fact, Ezorath is responsible for this devastation; his spells and summoned creatures did quite a number on the tower during their attack on the bandits so many years ago.

The Meenlock Menace

As the PCs explore the ruins, they shouldn't immediately be assaulted by the meenlocks that lurk in the tunnels below. In fact, the entrance to the meenlock warren is fairly well hidden, and it's entirely likely that the PCs won't discover either of the two entrances on their initial search of the ruins.

Nevertheless, the PCs should feel the presence of the menacing aberrations. Even before the meenlocks start using their fear auras and their rend mind attacks, the discovery of tiny body parts, carvings, and other strange artifacts should give the place a decidedly creepy feel. Ask for Listen and Spot checks once in a while, but despite the results, tell the PCs they hear and see nothing unusual.

You can heighten the sense of paranoia and brooding menace by periodically taking a randomly selected player aside to another room to describe a strange movement his character may catch out of the corner of his eye, or a sudden bizarre odor, or maybe even something as simple as the discovery of a gold coin wedged between a pair of bricks in a wall. These "private conferences" should set up a subtle sense of paranoia around the game table; the other players won't know for sure what went on behind those closed doors, and as a result the sinister themes of this adventure will be enhanced.

If the PCs don't find the entrances to the meenlock tunnels and instead set up camp in the ruins, the meenlocks take note. Later that night, they use dimension door to leave their tunnels and appear atop the ruined walls that surround area **1**. The Twisted King uses his spells (notably *ghost sound* and *dancing lights*) to try to draw lone PC guards off into the desert, where the other meenlocks use their fear auras and paralytic claws to immobilize their prey. If the PCs refuse to be lured, the meenlocks use their rend mind attacks from hiding on any obvious arcane spellcasters. A sleeping character who fails to resist this attack lurches awake with a scream. The meenlocks dimension door back into their tunnels after each rend mind attack, returning to assault the same PC after 10 minutes or so. If discovered, the Twisted King uses *obscuring mist* to fill the area with fog, while the other meenlocks use their fear auras and paralysis attacks to immobilize as many PCs as possible. A meenlock that takes any damage at all dimension doors back into the tunnels to hide.

Even if the PCs try to flee, they aren't safe, for the meenlocks track them and continue to try to capture a victim, repeating their tactics whenever the PCs sleep. Once they set their sights on a victim, the

meenlocks only give up the chase if at least two of their number are slain.

1. Poisoned Well

This circular courtyard is open to the sky. Small drifts of sand cover the floor and lie heaped against the crumbling walls. A partially collapsed well sits in the center, around which several buckets are strewn. The buckets are half-filled with sand, giving some indication that they have not been used in quite some time. Beyond the well an archway leads into the main part of the structure.

When caravans used to pass through this region on a regular basis, this courtyard was used as a campsite and a place from which to draw water. When Falariss and his men took it over, they used it for much the same purpose, except that they robbed and murdered those who stayed and disposed of the bodies in the desert. Now the courtyard lies deserted and the well has become dangerous in its own right.

The well itself plunges 15 feet to an oily surface of water, itself about 15 feet deep. A sizable quantity of id moss grows along the inside of the well, in a strip a few inches wide just above the water level. Its presence has contaminated the water with its poison. Any PC drinking the water can make a Survival check (DC 20) to notice that the water tastes a little odd, and if the water is immediately spit out, the character gains a +2 bonus on the resulting save to resist the tainted water's effects.

Anyone who drinks the poisoned water must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 12) or take 1d2 points of Intelligence damage. One minute later, the victim must save again or take 1d6 points of Intelligence damage.

Treasure: If a character correctly recognizes the id moss for what it is, 6 doses of the poisonous stuff can be harvested from the well.

2. Eerie Drawings

A long rectangular chamber lies beyond the archway, constructed from the same red clay brick as the courtyard. A thick layer of sand covers the floor of the chamber, and here and there a discarded piece of camping equipment pokes out eerily from the dust. The walls of the chamber seem to be covered with shadowy markings of some sort, although closer examination and better illumination is required to make sense of them.

An examination of the discarded equipment finds an empty backpack, an empty flask, gnawed bones, and the shredded remains of a bedroll (all remnants left by former travelers). A successful Search check (DC 20) also uncovers a few things of a more disturbing nature: a single human tooth with a bit of dried flesh still stuck to the root, a clump of hair wedged in a crack in the wall, a broken arrow caked with dried blood, and what looks like a strangely light red-brown stone (but is in fact half a dried kidney, as a successful DC 15 Heal check reveals). Perhaps the most disturbing is a charred stump of charcoal that reveals itself to be a horribly burnt human finger upon close examination. These grim remnants are all that remains of sudden, horrid attacks on travelers by the meenlocks.

The drawings on the walls are made with charcoal (crafted by the meenlocks using burnt remnants from those lucky enough to be killed rather than captured). These drawings are only present at about 2 feet or lower; no drawings mar the stone walls above this height. The drawings depict stick figures engaged in various murderous activities; limbs and legs and heads lie in mounds while other stick figures seem to be feasting on the crudely drawn parts of their victims.

The entrances to the meenlock tunnels below are hidden beneath layers of sand on the floor. The meenlocks take care to cover them with sand after they are used and then dimension door into their tunnels to avoid disturbing the sand. The tunnels are opened only when they need to transfer victims below. Each is capped with flat sandstone blocks that seal access to the tunnels, and even if the sand is cleared away they remain quite cleverly hidden. A successful Search check (DC 30) made in the right square uncovers the opening; if the sand is cleared away the DC drops to 25. The sandstone slabs are surprisingly light, and weigh only 100 pounds apiece—two meenlocks working together can pry one up and push one around, although once a slab is in place it sits flush with the ground. Unless some sort of handholds are carved into a slab, it cannot be opened from above.

If a slab is removed, a dark shaft is revealed. This shaft is barely 2 feet wide, and the walls are lined with black moss that is both firmly rooted in the walls and strangely soft to the touch. The moss gives numerous handholds, and as a result, the Climb check to navigate the 20-foot deep shaft is only DC 5. Of course, the wretched stink of rotting flesh that wafts warmly up from the darkness below may give PCs pause before they plunge in.

Sandstone Slab: 4 inches thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; Break DC 28.

3. Realm of the Twisted King (EL 8)

When Falariss controlled the way station, he dug out a small storage cave beneath the central chamber to store extra provisions and the spoils from their raids. In so doing, he discovered a tangled maze of small tunnels in the rock. When Ezorath destroyed his gang, Falariss fled into the tunnels and hid. Now, he and his meenlock minions lurk in the tunnels, waiting for unwary travelers to use the ruins above as a campsite.

The meenlock tunnels are quite small; ceiling height rarely goes above 2 feet, and the width rarely deviates from 2-1/2 feet. The meenlocks can navigate these tunnels with ease, but for Small and Medium creatures these tunnels are narrow and low. Such creatures move at only 1/4 their normal speed, suffer a –4 penalty on attacks with light weapons and a –8 penalty on attacks with one-handed weapons. Two-handed weapons cannot be used in the tunnel. Large creatures can move only 5 feet per round, and anything larger than that can move only with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 30). All Small and larger creatures lose their Dexterity bonus (if any) to Armor Class while in this area.

The tunnels themselves are covered with black moss that grants a +4 circumstance bonus on Move Silently checks, and the air is hot, close, and reeks of rotting flesh. At the end of the twisting maze of tunnels is a small earthen cave

that contains various trophies taken from the creatures' previous victims, including several polished skulls. It is from the less-well preserved specimens that the horrid smell emanates.

Creatures: Four meenlocks dwell in these tunnels, along with their lord, the Twisted King. The meenlocks take great offence if the capstones to their tunnels are tampered with, but wait for intruders to get further into their tunnels before they attack.

The Twisted King resembles a normal meenlock with a slightly oversized head. He wears a shabby brown cloak, a badly frayed scroll belt, plain iron amulet. Malicious and cruel by even meenlock standards, the Twisted King delights in capturing and torturing arcane spellcasters. He reserves the transformation process for such individuals, and prefers to simply kill members of other classes. He lost his familiar years ago, and has never bothered to replace it since he now finds animals repulsive and fit only for food.

Meenlocks (4): CR 3; Tiny Aberration; HD 4d8; hp 18 each; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +3; Grp –7; Atk +3 melee (1d2–2 plus paralysis, claw); Full Atk +3 melee (1d2–2 plus paralysis, 2 claws); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA fear aura, meenlock transformation, paralysis, rend mind; SQ darkvision 60 ft., dimension door, telepathy 300 ft.; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 6, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 15; *Monster Manual II* 146.

Skills: Hide +12, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Spot +4, Survival +5.

Feats: Alertness, Track.

Fear Aura (Su): As a free action, a meenlock can produce a 30-foot-radius burst centered on itself; all creatures in this area that fail a DC 14 Will save become catatonic with fear for 1d4+4 rounds. Such creatures are considered helpless as they stand in place, shivering and staring, or otherwise roll into a fetal position on the ground and sob quietly. A creature that makes the save against this effect cannot be affected again by that meenlock's fear aura for 24 hours. Meenlocks are immune to the fear aura of other meenlocks. The save DC is Charisma-based. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Meenlock Transformation (Su): Typically, three meenlocks can carry a Medium creature; those that are paralyzed or catatonic with fear are carried back to the meenlock lair and bound. Given time, meenlocks can transform helpless victims into meenlocks themselves, as long as at least three meenlocks are in physical contact with the victim for the duration of the transformation. After 1d6 hours of physical contact with the meenlocks, all of the subject's ability scores are reduced to 1 (except for any already at 0). There is no saving throw against this effect. A *heal* or *greater restoration* restores the creature to normal. In another 1d6 hours of meenlock contact, the transformation is complete; the subject becomes forever a meenlock, losing

The Twisted King

all of its previous classes and abilities. At this point, only a *wish* or *miracle* spell can restore the victim.

Paralysis (Ex): Any creature hit by a meenlock's claw must make a DC 14 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 3d6 rounds.

Rend Mind (Su): A meenlock can project thoughts and suggestions into the mind of a single creature within 300 feet. These thoughts cause paranoia—images of stalking monsters or peering eyes, and the sensation of being followed, watched, or sized up. The target of this mind-affecting phantasm must make a successful DC 14 Will save or take 1d4 points of Wisdom damage. Once a meenlock uses this ability, it must wait 1d4 rounds before doing so again. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Dimension Door (Su): Once every 2 rounds, a meenlock can produce a supernatural effect like that of a *dimension door* spell, except that the range is only 60 feet and no additional weight can be transported.

Possessions: Two *wrathful eyes*.

The Twisted King, Meenlock Sorcerer 5: CR 6; Tiny Aberration; HD 4d8 plus 5d4; hp 33; Init +5; Spd 20 ft. (4 squares); AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +5; Grp –5; Atk +5 melee (1d2–2, claw); Full Atk +5 melee (1d2–2, 2 claws); Space/ Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA fear aura, meenlock transformation, paralysis, rend mind, spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft., dimension door, telepathy; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +9; Str 6, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills: Hide +12, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Spellcraft +7, Spot +4, Survival +5.

Feats: Alertness, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Track.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/5): 0—*acid splash, dancing lights, ghost sound, mage hand, prestidigitation, touch of fatigue* (DC 13); 1st—*disguise self, obscuring mist, magic missile, shield*; 2nd—*blindness/deafness* (DC 15), *daze monster* (DC 15).

Possessions: *Amulet of natural armor +1, cloak of resistance +1, wand of magic missile* (CL 5, 19 charges), scroll of *invisibility* and *slow*, scroll of *enervation*, 3 *wrathful eyes*.

Tactics: If the Twisted King discovers that his palace has been violated he uses his scroll of *invisibility* to spy on the PCs before alerting the others telepathically to the size and composition of the party.

If the PCs intrude upon these tunnels the meenlocks use their increased mobility in the tunnels to catch the PCs in the radius of their fear auras, and use their rend mind attacks while staying out of melee. They only use their *wrathful eyes* in desperation, since they have limited numbers of these weapons. The Twisted King uses *magic missile* to damage the PCs, and *daze monster* to render any obvious bards, wizards, or sorcerers helpless. Those who persist in exploring the tunnels are subjected to guerrilla attacks by the meenlocks, who use dimension door in conjunction with Hide and Move Silently skills to surround and harass the PCs. The Twisted King casts *shield*, then unleashes his offensive spells, using the same hit-and-run tactics as his servants. The meenlocks fight to the death with a ferocity that might surprise unwary or careless PCs.

Treasure: The southern cave is where the meenlocks sleep and take their victims to be consumed or transformed. Most of the equipment and grisly trophies lying about the cave are worthless, though a successful Search check (DC 20) uncovers the following: a masterwork light wooden shield, 2 tanglefoot bags, a healer's kit, a set of masterwork thieves' tools, and a gold armlet set with a dozen azurites (worth a total of 175 gp).

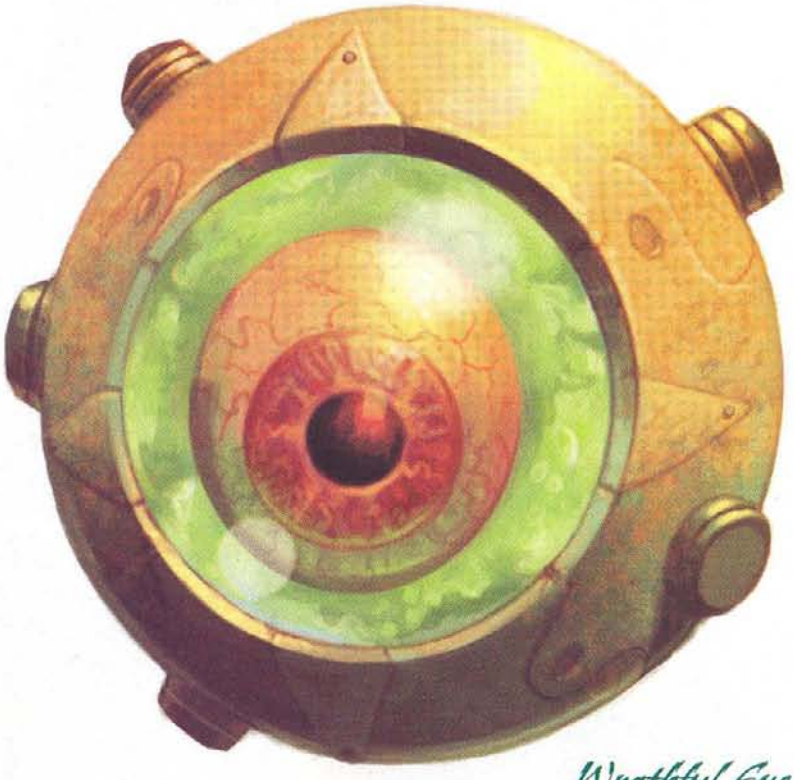
Wondrous Item—Wrathful Eye

A *wrathful eye* is a small mummified humanoid eyeball as hard as a marble surrounded by an ornate metal casing. When thrown at a creature that can see with a successful ranged touch attack (to a maximum range of 20 feet) the eyeball bursts, striking the victim permanently blind if it fails a DC 13 Fort save. Alternatively, the eye can be used in a sling, increasing its range but requiring a normal ranged attack to hit.

Faint Necromancy; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *blindness/deafness*; Price 300 gp.

Concluding the Adventure

Should the PCs defeat the meenlocks, they have made the way station safe for



Wrathful Eye

other travelers. Of course, given the way station's secluded location, it's just as likely to become the lair of another group of monsters or bandits.

If the PCs flee the way station for the relative safety of the desert, the meenlocks follow them as detailed earlier in the adventure. Only by killing at least two of the meenlocks can the PCs escape their horrid attentions.

If the PCs came to the way station looking for Falariss, they should find some scraps of paper in the Twisted King's lair that indicate that he and Falariss were one in the same; the rumors of a vast treasure hoard would seem to have been false.

If the PCs were looking for Yerrin Andrak, the missing merchant, they should find several of his belongings in the Twisted King's lair, but no sign of him or his body. Of course, this is because he's been transformed into one of the meenlocks; something that can be unraveled only with powerful magic.

If the PCs are attempting to find Ezorath's lost tomb, they might find some information about the tomb amongst the trash in area 3, or perhaps Falariss himself might say something cryptic about the lost tomb because of his ancient connections with Ezorath.

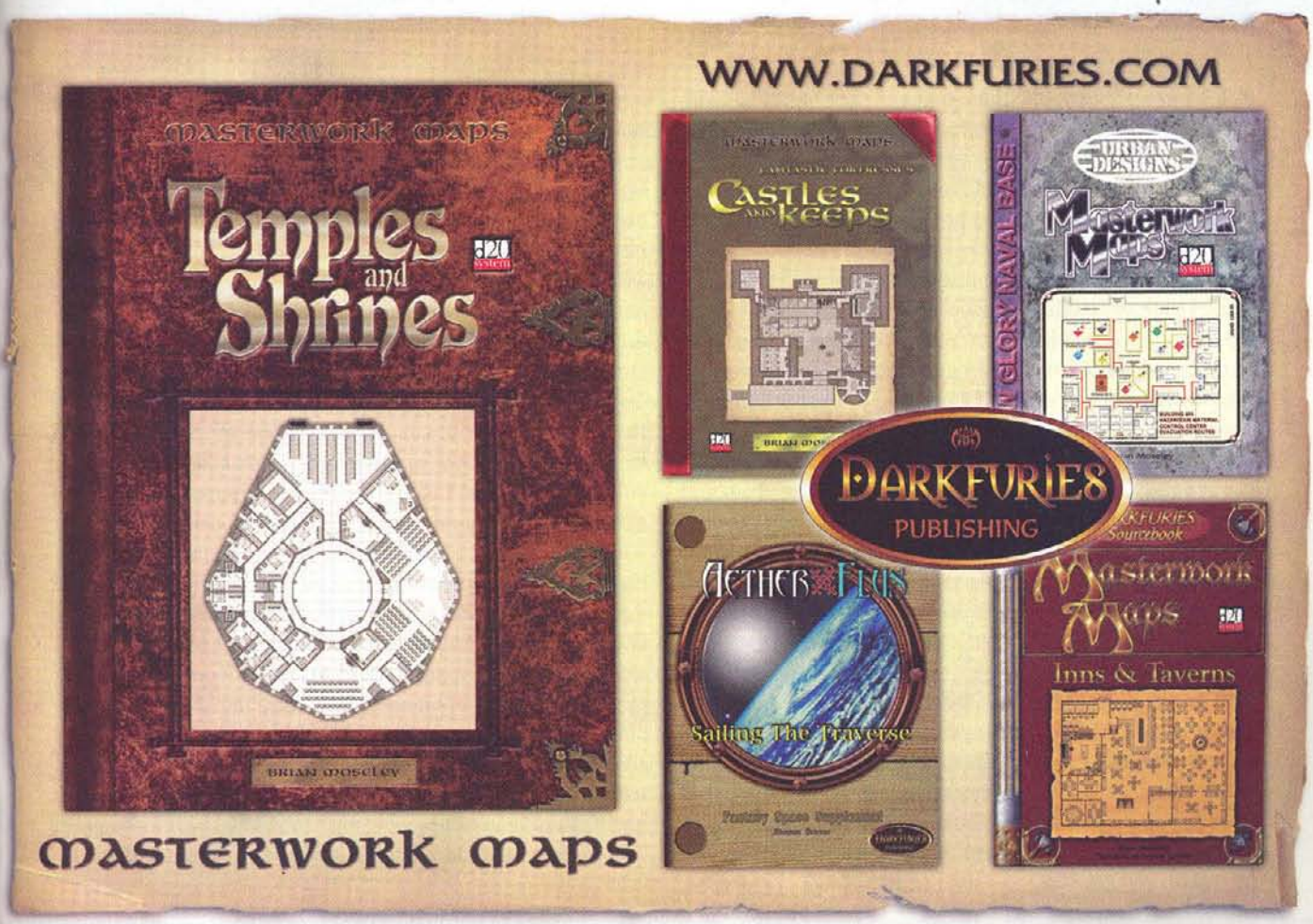
Finally, if any PCs have been captured and transformed, they can be restored to their true forms only with a *wish* or *miracle* spell. Securing such a powerful spell and possibly transporting a dangerous meenlock to receive the effects of the spell make for an extended campaign; just make sure to let the player whose character was transformed roll up a new character to play in the meantime!

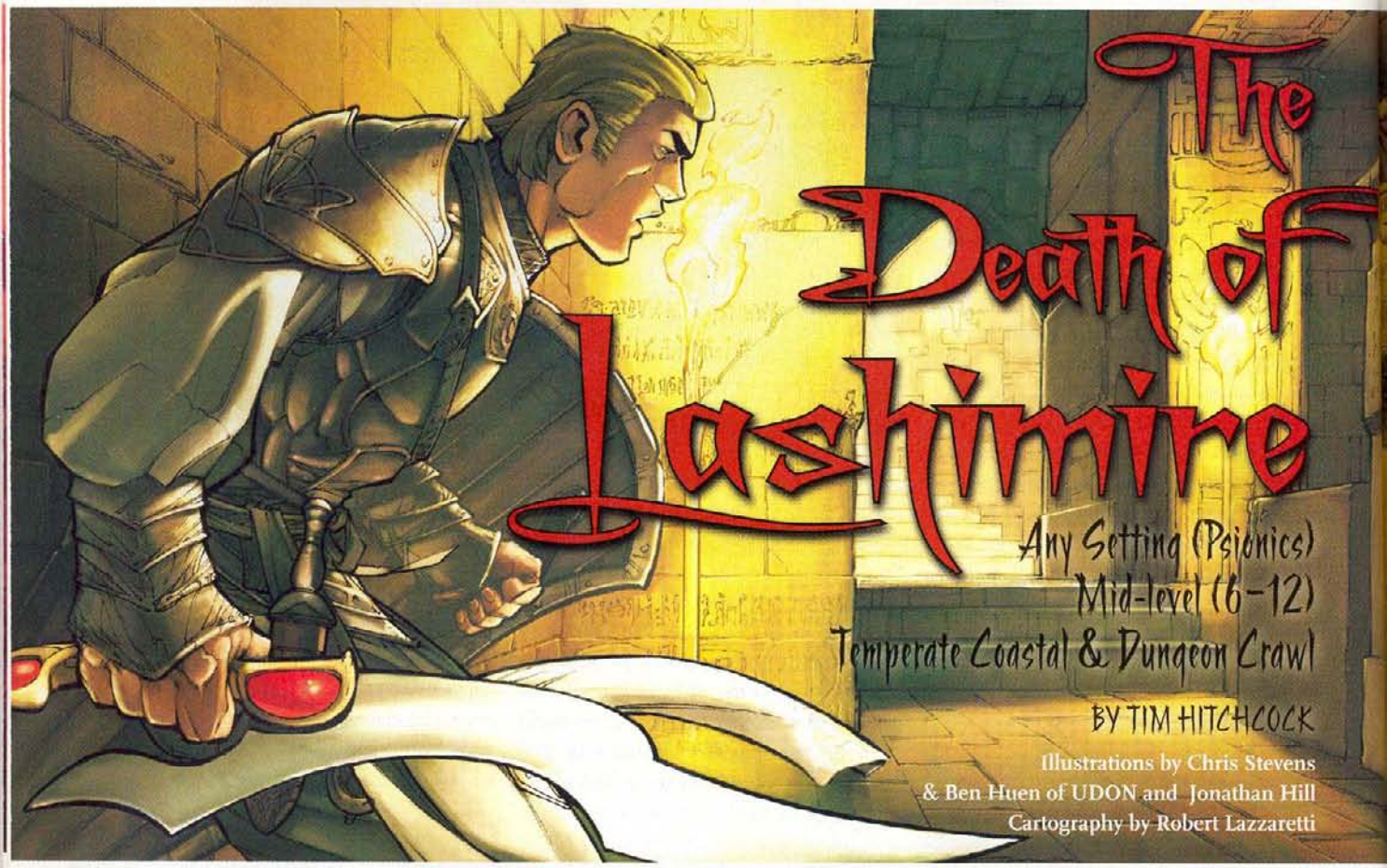
Phillip writes, "I have always liked meenlocks, ever since the old Fiend Folio. *They bring back all those fears I used to have as a child of bogeymen. I hope players get as big a fright out of the meenlocks in this adventure." This is Phillip's second appearance in* DUNGEON.

Scaling the Adventure

While "Palace of the Twisted King" is designed for four characters of 5th-level, it can easily be modified for PCs of lower levels using the following methods. Don't forget to adjust the treasure found in the adventure appropriately.

If you run the adventure for lower-level characters, you should lower the Twisted King's Sorcerer level by 2 for every level lower than 5th the PCs are. Reducing the number of meenlocks encountered in the adventure by 1 or 2 can also reduce the danger of the adventure. Finally, for lower-level characters, you should consider making the tunnels under the way station large enough for Small and Medium creatures to move around in, removing the substantial combat penalties the cramped conditions would otherwise create.





The Death of Lashimire

Any Setting (Psionics)
Mid-level (6–12)
Temperate Coastal & Dungeon Crawl

BY TIM HITCHCOCK

Illustrations by Chris Stevens
& Ben Huen of UDON and Jonathan Hill
Cartography by Robert Lazzaretti

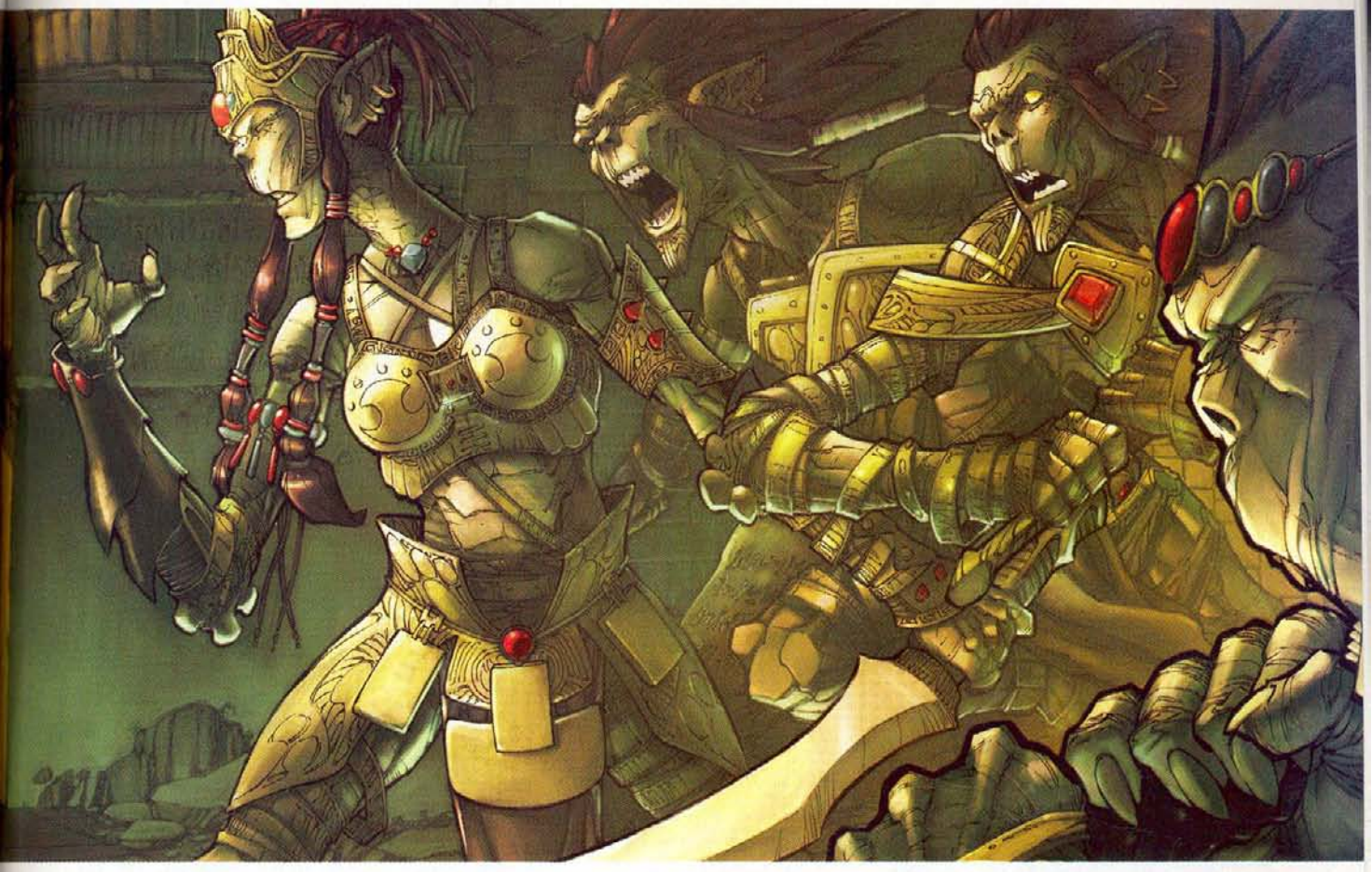
On a remote island, just three miles off the coast of a lightly settled frontier, a single hut faces the open sea, tiny curls of smoke drifting up from its crooked chimney. Beyond, an overgrown trail winds up the face of the isle's only peak to a shallow cave at the top. The island hardly appears sinister, yet its core festers with evil, betrayal, and madness. This is the lair of Lashimire the Shunned, and his latest acquisition may just spell his doom.

"The Death of Lashimire" is an adventure designed to challenge four 12th-level characters. Several of the villains in this adventure use psionics, or otherwise utilize material from the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*. If you wish to use this adventure without psionics, check out the Adapting the Adventure sidebar on page 39. Although most of the action in this adventure takes place at a single location, the main antagonists move from area to area. A timeline is provided to help you keep track of NPC actions and locations. Since the PCs can interrupt the sequence of events dictated by the timeline, make sure you understand the motivations of the key NPCs before running the adventure.

Adventure Background

About 30 years ago, when the infamous psion Lashimire Al' Dtenoré had a seat on the Council of Seers (a shadowy organization of psionicly gifted scholars), he earned a reputation for both creative manipulation of psionic energy and for the lack of morality of his experiments. His work predominantly involved untested theories about the creation of psionic undead entities known as callers in darkness. The Council of Seers approached him about the ethics of his theories several times, but when they discovered that Lashimire was secretly using human prisoners on the Astral Plane as test subjects, the council expelled him (as execution of a member or ex-member is forbidden). Angry and bitter, Lashimire retired to his abode, a tiny cave on a dismal, small outcropping of rocks about three miles off the seacoast, near the tiny thorp of Plowsfeld. He and his assistant Arclian continued his research with the help of a githyanki general named Gythra-Kyharz, with whom he had come into contact while conducting experiments on the Astral Plane. Gythra-Kyharz helped Lashimire acquire human source materials for his experiments in exchange for more undead minions to bolster her armies on the Astral Plane. Lashimire's friendly arrangement with the githyanki remained on good terms for over a decade.

Recently, a local band of sahuagin uncovered an ancient sunken city that appeared to be of gith origin. The city was built around a disturbingly well-preserved castle, the doors of which resisted all attempts by the sahuagin to enter. They noted that the doors seemed to bear a strange, sword-shaped indentation. Knowing Lashimire was an expert on githyanki culture, they approached him with their discovery. The psion consulted with his githyanki allies about the city, but they swore they had never built permanent settlements in this region. Believing the githyanki were lying to him, Lashimire decided to investigate the ruined city for himself. He concluded that the central building was warded to bar entry



to those who did not wield a githyanki *silver sword*, so he made a special visit to the astral fortress of his long-time associate General Gythra-Kyharz and smuggled her *silver sword* back to the Material Plane. It didn't take long for Gythra-Kyharz to discover the theft, or to realize who had betrayed her, but since the outraged general didn't want any of her superiors to realize she allowed her sword to be stolen, she did not report its theft. Instead, she intends to lead a small, covert group of githyanki to retrieve it. As this adventure begins, the githyanki have found Lashimire's assistant and killed him, but have yet to find Lashimire himself or recover the sword. The psion is currently on the mainland looking to acquire a *necklace of adaptation* but soon returns to his lair. Little does he suspect that a band of murderous githyanki and a party of adventurers (the PCs) wait for him to arrive!

Adventure Hooks

Ideally, you should introduce Lashimire's reputation for evil experimentation and trafficking in undead early in your campaign. Rumors of his hidden laboratories and magnificent libraries have circulated through grapevines for years since Lashimire's expulsion from the Council of Seers, yet none of the rumors seem to be able to agree on the location of his lair.

If you aren't able to introduce Lashimire in this way, his reputation has instead been covered up by the Council of Seers, whose members view him as both an embarrassing secret and a dangerous renegade. Nevertheless, a successful bardic knowledge or Knowledge (psicraft) check (DC 30) reveals vague legends of Lashimire's library, which is rumored to hold great magical and psionic tomes.

In any case, use one of the following three adventure hooks to get the PCs to travel to Lashimire's lair.

- The PCs may need to contact Lashimire on their own to petition him for an answer to a mysterious question. In this case, they have managed to learn the location of his lair in a prior adventure. Alternately, they may have heard rumors that Lashimire is dead, and their discovery of the location of his lair could lead to vast riches and treasure.
- The PCs are approached by a mysterious woman named Tasha, who needs them to deliver a psionic item to an old friend. She gives the PCs directions to this "friend's home," a small island three miles off the coast. In fact, this woman is a member of the Council of Seers, and the item she wants the PCs to deliver is a psionic version of a *robe of powerlessness*. She hopes that if the robe doesn't ruin Lashimire, he'll be enraged by the affront enough to attack the PCs and that the PCs, in defending themselves, will kill the troublesome renegade before he further casts shadows over the Council's reputation.
- If there's a psionic PC in the party who has achieved some measure of fame or notoriety, he may receive a mysterious invitation from Lashimire himself to come to his lair to discuss an exchange of knowledge. Nothing in the invitation forbids the psionic character from bringing along allies, and since the address given

is in a relatively remote area in known sahuagin territory, bringing along some allies might be a good idea.

Adventure Timeline

This timeline describes the intended actions for Lashimire, the githyanki death squad, and the sahuagin during the one-hour timeframe starting from the point the characters arrive inside Lashimire's lair. The timeline doesn't account for actions taken by the PCs, and these actions can easily alter or disrupt the timeline.

Altering the Timeline

The primary encounter of the adventure is with Lashimire. Though his intended course of action is suggested by the timeline, the DM may need to "fudge" its progression in order to ensure the psion encounters the PCs. Remember that the adventure takes place inside Lashimire's home, and if he sees any evidence that there's trouble there he won't leave to explore the sunken city. If he believes that his home or its secrets are threatened, he makes every attempt to dispose of the threat, recruiting the help of his aquatic allies if necessary. Only if PCs are exceptionally stealthy and fastidiously careful to hide the bodies of any githyanki slain and don't leave any obvious signs of their passing can they escape Lashimire's eventual detection.

Additional Developments

"The Death of Lashimire" is driven by two separate factions: Lashimire and his sahuagin allies, and the githyanki death squad. Once Lashimire returns, the PCs find themselves caught between two powerful groups. Make sure to study the major NPCs in this adventure. Most of the encounters are not room specific, leaving plenty of opportunities for both players and their opponents to plan ambushes, lay traps, or use other strategies. All foes are intelligent and should be played that way. It's even possible for the PCs to ally with one of the groups, although Lashimire's paranoia and the githyanki's rage makes such a tactic dangerous at best.

Time Elapsed	Event
0 minutes	Characters arrive in Lashimire's abode, either by entering via the underwater tunnel to area 8 or by descending the ladder to area 3.
5 minutes	The githyanki death squad, led by Gythra-Kyharz, arrives at area 2. Gythra-Kyharz lights incense in the skulls in area 2 so she and her minions won't trigger the traps in the lair below and to open the entrance to the lair.
15 minutes	Lashimire *teleports* into area 4 and then walks to area 6, where he spends several minutes eating a snack and relaxing after successfully securing a *necklace of adaptation*.
24 minutes	Lashimire walks to area 5 to check on the caller in darkness and to make some last-minute consultations with some notes.
30 minutes	Lashimire returns to area 6 to gather his gear and prepare for the underwater journey to the sunken city.
32 minutes	Lashimire walks to area 7 and retrieves the silver key from the bottom drawer of the desk.
35 minutes	Lashimire enters area 8 to speak with the sahuagin for 10 minutes to finalize their plans. The *phase door* in area 2 activates and the blood canvas traps in area 3 deactivate, and the githyanki death squad enters the lair. Gythra-Kyharz suspects Lashimire has hidden the *silver sword* in area 5 or 6; she takes half the squad to area 6 and sends the rest to area 5 to search.
45 minutes	Before he leaves, Lashimire makes a quick walkthrough of his abode to make sure it is secure. If he finds nothing out of place, he returns to area 8, dons his new *necklace of adaptation*, retrieves the *silver sword*, and accompanies the sahuagin through the submerged tunnel and into the ocean. It's far more likely that he encounters the githyanki or the PCs at this time, though. If he does, he immediately attacks, enraged that his lair has been invaded.

Lashimire's Lair

Lashimire's lair is located on a small, rocky island about 3 miles from the mainland. You can place this island anywhere in your campaign world along any unsettled or lightly settled coastline. The journey to the isle is not covered in this adventure; any encounters the PCs have on their trip should be tailored to the region in which you place the isle. There are no nearby settlements, and no regular ferry service to the isle; Lashimire uses *teleport* to come and go from his lair.

The island itself has only a few features of note. A small shack sits on its southern face, near the shore. A faint trail leads up the side of the isle from the shack to a low cave opening near the island's single peak, 80 feet above sea level. This cave entrance is difficult to notice from air or land, requiring a successful Spot check (DC 10) modified by distance to discover. Lashimire's actual lair consists of several rooms carved out of the island's core, and is accessed by this cave.

The underground section of his abode is carved from rock, and the walls polished smooth. Ceilings are 10 feet tall. The corridors are circular and 10 feet in diameter, with a 1-foot wide walkway on the bottom of each corridor. The corridors' uneven shape makes maneuvering difficult, and characters who engage in combat inside them suffer a –2 penalty on their attack rolls, Reflex saves, and Dexterity checks. The penalty ceases as soon as the character exits the corridor. Unless otherwise specified, Lashimire's abode is completely dark and characters that are unable to see without a light source must provide one.

Finally, the underground section (areas 3–8) is warded with a *dimensional lock* effect. This effect functions at caster level 15, and is maintained by a potent magic ring in area 4. As long as the effect is active, *astral projection, blink, dimension door, ethereal jaunt, etherealness, gate, maze, plane shift, shadow walk, teleport*, and similar spells, psionic powers, or spell-like and psi-like powers do not function in these areas.

1. Arcilan's Shack (EL 12)

This fifteen-foot square shack stands on thick pilings driven into a rocky beach,

ISLAND CRAG
APPROX 200' X 175'
GRANITE & BASALT
ONE SQUARE = 5 FEET
CAVE
2
SHACK
side view
8
7
3A
4
3A
3
3A
6
3A
5
HIDDEN PATH
N
overview
SHACK
1
LASHMIRE'S
CRAG
PLOWFELD

although the floor of the shack is still only a few feet off the ground. The roof is made of wooden shingles and the walls are crusted with sea salt. A single closed door on the north face of the shack provides an entrance.

This small shack was the home of Lashimire's assistant, a man named Arclian. Among other jobs, it was his responsibility to watch over the isle while Lashimire was away, and to prevent explorers and other visitors from approaching. Unfortunately, only a short time before the PCs arrive, he failed at this task.

A successful Listen check (DC 10) allows a character to hear a loud banging coming from inside the shack.

A barely discernable pathway leads up the isle's slope from the shack; a successful Survival check (DC 20) is enough to notice the faint path. This path is the only safe land route to area 2. All other routes require Climb checks (DC 15) along slippery rocks. Failure by 5 or more indicates a fall of 1d6×10 feet.

Swaths of blood stain the floor and walls in the shack. Most of the blood is from Arclian's body, which lies in a heap against the far wall.

Creatures: Inside the shack, a group of six githyanki soulknives are busy tearing the place apart, searching for the missing *silver sword*. This group arrived in advance of the bulk of the death squad led by Gythra-Kyharz in order to secure the territory and scout the area; her group is scheduled to arrive soon (but not until the PCs enter Lashimire's lair). The soldiers are tall, gaunt figures with rough yellow-skin, pointy, serrated ears, and long black hair pulled into topknots.

Githyanki Soulknife 7 (6): CR 8; Medium humanoid (extraplanar, psionic); HD 7d10+14; hp 57 each (currently 40 each); Spd 40 ft.; AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +5; Grp +8; Atk/Full Atk +10 melee (1d10+4/17–20, *+1 keen mind blade*) or +9 ranged (1d10+4/17–20, *+1 keen mind blade*); SA mind blade, psi-like abilities, psychic strike +2d8, throw mind blade; SQ darkvision 60 ft., free draw, githyanki traits, mind blade enhancement +1, power resistance 12, shape mind blade; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Autohypnosis +11, Balance +4, Jump +4, Listen +11, Spot +11, Tumble +12.

Feats: Cleave, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Power Attack, Speed of Thought[B], Weapon Focus (mind blade)[B], Wild Talent[B].

Languages: Common, Gith.

Psi-Like Abilities (Sp): 3/day—*concealing amorpha, far hand, psionic daze* (DC 9), *psionic dimension door*. Manifester level 3rd.

Possessions: *+1 chain shirt*, heavy steel shield, *ring of protection +1*, 3 *brain lock pearls*, *potion of water walk*.

Tactics: Upon spotting opponents, the githyanki move to the sides of the hut to avoid being flanked and to aid in flanking anyone who enters the hut. If the PCs don't immediately attack them, one of the soulknives addresses them by saying, "Infidels, we have come to liberate the general's sword and thereby demand your immediate surrender!"

If the PCs surrender, they are stripped of their belongings, bound, and eventually hauled off to the Astral Plane to live the remainder of their lives as slaves. While this might be the inception of an interesting campaign, it's beyond the scope of this adventure.

If the PCs attack, the githyanki fight back with their mind blades. They have all imbued their weapons with destructive psychic energy, and thus inflict +2d8 damage on their first hit. The githyanki fight to the death.

Treasure: The githyanki have already looted Arcilan's body and have stacked his gear neatly on a desk near his corpse. Included are a *ring of protection +2*, *bracers of armor +4*, a *+1 psychokinetic dagger*, a *dorje of id insinuation* (23 charges), and 147 gp.

2. Entrance to Lashimire's Abode

A small cave opening near the top of the island's only crag is flanked by a pair of four-foot-high stakes in the ground, each of which supports a human skull. The top of each skull has been cut off, and the empty eye sockets stare out to sea. The cave beyond is small and cramped, but has been swept clean of rubble and dust.

A successful Search check (DC 20) reveals a strangely flat circular section of stone in the cave's floor. A successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 15) or Search check (DC 25) is enough to note that the stone seems to be a plug in the floor, perhaps blocking an opening. The stone plug can be bashed through with enough work, or it can be removed with magic. A successful Psicraft check (DC 27) is enough to identify the plug as a permanent psionic *phase door*. Lashimire usually enters his abode via *teleport*, and hasn't bothered using this entrance for many years.

An inspection of the skulls reveals a black, greasy substance inside them. This is resin from enhanced incense Lashimire burns in the skulls when he expects visitors. One dose of incense must be burned in each skull, and the incense takes 30 minutes to burn completely. Once it has done so, the blood canvas traps in area **3** deactivate for 1 hour. This is also the condition Lashimire has set for the activation of the *phase door*. Once activated in this manner, the *phase door* remains accessible to all creatures for 1 hour before returning to solid rock. Lashimire keeps several doses of the incense in area **6**; he burns doses of it only rarely, when he expects visitors or asks his assistant to enter his abode.

If the stone plug is removed, a rickety ladder made of humanoid bones leading down 40 feet to area **3** is revealed. The ladder can support up to 300 pounds before it collapses, sending anyone on it tumbling down to the hard stone floor below for the appropriate falling damage.

Stone Plug: 1 ft. thick; Hardness 8; hp 180; Break DC 44.

Development: As indicated on the timeline, the githyanki death squad arrives here only 5 minutes after the PCs enter the lair. Details on the death squad are given at the end of the adventure; if any PCs remain here, the githyanki attack them immediately as detailed in that section. Otherwise, Gythra-Kyharz lights her stolen doses of incense in the skulls to deactivate the traps and activate the *phase door*.

3. Doors of Flesh and Walls of Blood (EL 13)

A bone ladder rises up from the center of this square room. A large painted canvas made out of deer or goatskin is stretched along each wall. Each canvas bears highly detailed images that appear to have been

painted with blood. The images are maddeningly abstract; viewed at one angle, they seem to depict the visage of an older man with deep-set eyes, but viewed at another they appear to depict hundreds of different faces that all seem to flow together into a sea of expressions. An eight-foot-diameter patch of what appears to be living flesh interrupts each canvas in the middle of each wall. Veins course through these discs of flesh, which also appear to be dotted with fine hairs.

This room provides access to all four of the lair's primary chambers, and as such, Lashimire spared no expense in protecting it with some quite devious and disturbing traps. Lashimire himself is immune to the effects of these traps.

Traps: All four of the blood canvas murals are psionic traps. Any creature in this room who more than glances at one of the murals must make a Will save (DC 21). A creature that touches a mural saves at a –2 penalty, even if it isn't looking at the mural. Success indicates that the character is immune to that particular mural, but may still succumb to one of the other three murals. Failure indicates that the character suffers the effects of *insanity* as he notices himself in the mural, seeing himself as a child holding the hand of a sinister older man with bulging eyes and strangely huge pupils. A character can attempt to consciously avoid looking at the murals with a successful Concentration check (DC 10).

Attacks against the canvases can harm them, but they repair damage to themselves at the rate of 10 hit points per round. Only acid or fire damage cannot be self-repaired.

The strange discs of flesh in the middle of each wall are also trapped. A character who touches this fleshy door finds its surface warm and disturbingly pleasant. The flesh feels elastic if pushed or prodded, almost as if it were stretched over an opening in the wall. Lashimire can cause a flesh door to open at a touch, but any other creature must cut the flesh open or otherwise destroy it in order to pass through.

Although each flesh door has only 5 hit points and self-repairs damage done to it at the rate of 1 point per round (except for acid or fire damage, which permanently damage it), it bleeds profusely. A flesh door must be reduced to less than 0 hit points in order for a creature to pass through the opening beyond. When a flesh door suffers damage, the creature that damaged the door is beset upon with a particularly horrible and anguished mental scream of pain and despair and must make a Will save (DC 20) or take 14d6 damage as similar great wounds tear open on the victim's body. A successful save halves the damage done. This is a mind-affecting effect similar to the *recall agony* power.

Blood Canvas: CR 7; psionic device; location trigger; automatic reset; psionic effect (*insanity*, 15th-level psion, DC 21 Will save negates); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32; hp 20, self-repair 10 hit points per round (except for acid or fire damage).

Flesh Door: CR 7; psionic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; psionic effect (augmented *recall agony*, 15th-level psion, 14d6 damage, DC 20 Will save halves); Search DC 27; Disable Device DC 27; hp 5, self-repair 1 hp per round.

4. Dimensional Lockdown (EL 12)

This room is colorfully lit by twelve glowing orange crystals mounted on three-foot-tall bone standards arranged on a twenty-foot-diameter copper band inlaid in the floor. The crystals are unusual in that they look almost liquid, like rapidly melting ice, yet they maintain their general shape and do not diminish in size. The floor inside the ring is covered with a layer of white

sand, and in the ring's center stands a tall humanoid statue of red crystal.

This powerful magic ring was created for Lashimire by a powerful wizard ally named Korian, who became lost on the Astral Plane after he and Lashimire had a terrible argument about payment for the service. The ring is the source of the *dimensional lock* effect that suffuses areas **3–8**. Only the area within the ring is unprotected by this effect; anyone within the ring itself can use teleportation spells freely. Lashimire uses this area as a way to enter and exit his lair with ease.

Creature: Before Lashimire was forced to flee the Council of Seers, he stole a prized magic item from their library, a *crystal golem manual*. He used this magic tome to create the guardian of this chamber, a crystal golem, known to some as a psion-killer. Lashimire has little to fear from the construct, but the golem immediately attacks any other intruder it notices. The psion-killer targets creatures with psionic powers in favor of other targets, and once it starts an attack it pursues its quarry relentlessly until either it or its victim is slain, or until Lashimire commands it to stop.

Psion-Killer: CR 12; Large construct; HD 15d10+30; hp 112; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 28, touch 9, flat-footed 28; Base Atk +11; Grp +25; Atk +20 melee (2d10+10, slam); Full Atk +20 melee (2d10+10, 2 slams); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA dispel psionics; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 10/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to psionics, low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 31, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1; *Expanded Psionics Handbook* 208.

Dispel Psionics (Su): A psion-killer can use *dispel psionics* as a free action once per round. The effect is as an area dispel in a 30-foot-radius burst. The dispel check is 1d20+10.

Immunity to Psionics (Ex): Psion-killers completely resist psionic effects that are subject to power resistance.

5. Laboratory (EL 12)

The door leading into this room is a flesh door, identical to those in area **3**.

A case holding six different-sized barbed knives lies open on a large workbench in the center of this room, drenched with dark stains. A whetstone and a grinding wheel sit nearby, and a wooden crate rests under the bench. A scourge hangs on a hook on the north wall. To the west, a set of three stocks and an iron maiden fill out the room's morbid display. Three crystalline levers protrude from the east wall, the central one in the down position and the other two in the up position. An empty extension of the room to the south seems to contain a roiling cloud of mist or smoke.

This is where Lashimire conducts his necromantic experiments into the nature of psionic undeath, focusing on a dreadful creature called a caller in darkness. Lashimire has developed a method of adding to an existing caller in darkness by torturing living subjects over the course of several months before allowing the caller in darkness to absorb a terrified subject's essence. The equipment in the room may look sinister, but in fact is relatively mundane.

Lashimire's one-time-ally Korian created a unique cell to the south out of *walls of force*. The northern section of the cell actually consists of two *walls of force*, separated by a 5-foot span. Pulling the northernmost crystal lever causes the northern *wall of force* to vanish, and pulling the southernmost crystal lever causes the southern *wall*

of force to vanish. Returning either lever to the up position causes the associated *wall of force* to spring back into being. The central lever serves as a failsafe; as long as it is in the down position, the other two levers cannot be moved at all.

Creature: Lashimire has imprisoned an advanced caller in darkness in the cell to the south. At rest, the undead monster looks like a swirling cloud of smoke, but when it senses nearby victims hundreds of wailing faces boil up out of the cloud's depths. Lashimire often "feeds" victims to the caller in darkness, using the *wall of force* levers to first isolate the victim and then expose him to the undead monster without endangering himself.

The *walls of force* are invisible, and flipping the levers makes no unusual sounds or visual clues. It's possible that the PCs might unknowingly release the caller in darkness by lowering both walls at the same time, at which point the monster's readied action to fly out of the cell and into the room beyond takes effect. If it escapes, the caller in darkness attacks any living creatures it comes across, but it prefers to attack Lashimire if he's present.

Advanced Caller in Darkness: CR 12; Huge undead (incorporeal, psionic); HD 23d12; hp 149; Init +7; Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good); AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +11; Grp —; Atk +12 melee touch (2d6, incorporeal touch); Full Atk +12 melee touch (2d6, 4 incorporeal touches); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft.; SA psi-like abilities, steal essence; SQ incorporeal traits, undead traits, unnatural aura, vulnerability to sunlight; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +9, Will +15; Str —, Dex 14, Con —, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 17.

Skills: Hide +5, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (psionics) +24, Listen +26, Psicraft +12, Search +26, Sense Motive +26, Spot +26.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (incorporeal touch).

Language: Common.

Psi-Like Abilities: At will—*clairvoyant sense*, *concussion blast* (two targets, 3d6*), *detect psionics*, *ego whip* (2d4, DC 17*), *mind thrust* (7d10, DC 17*); 3/day—*death urge* (DC 17), *psychic crush* (DC 14**), *psionic suggestion* (three targets, DC 15*); 1/day—*co-opt concentration* (DC 19). Manifester level 7th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

*Includes augmentation for the caller's manifester level.

**Includes the inherent +4 save adjustment described in the power.

Steal Essence (Su): Any living, intelligent creature slain by a caller in darkness' touch attack is mentally absorbed into the monster's consciousness; the physical body of the victim remains intact. This is a free action and grants the caller 12 temporary hit points and a permanent new screaming face appears within its cloud. A caller in darkness can also steal the essence of living, intelligent creatures within 30 feet that are paralyzed or sleeping, or that are helpless due to having a mental ability score reduced to 0. Doing so is a standard action that provokes attacks of opportunity. The victim dies, and the caller gains 12 temporary hit points.

Unnatural Aura (Su): Any animal within 30 feet of a caller in darkness must make a DC 24 Will save or become panicked until it is no longer within 30 feet of the caller in darkness. A panicked creature that is cornered begins cowering. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Vulnerability to Sunlight (Ex): A caller in darkness is utterly powerless in natural sunlight and flees from it. It cannot attack in sunlight, and can take only a single move action or standard action each round, but not both (nor can it take full-round actions).

Treasure: A successful Search check (DC 30) discovers a tiny stone frog figurine hidden in a niche in the floor behind the iron maiden. This tiny object is in fact a rare *figurine of wondrous power*—an *opal frog*. The figurine belonged to one of Lashimire's visitors who inadvertently said something to trigger the psion's paranoia. Lashimire struck down the poor fool with a *psychic crush* and fed the body to the caller in darkness, but not before the *opal frog* fell from a pouch and tumbled unnoticed behind the iron maiden.

6. Lashimire's Quarters (EL 10)

This area consists of two rooms that open into each other. The northern section contains a large oval table and two chairs. Some wooden bowls and eating utensils sit on the table, and a small stone fireplace and half-full coal box rest in the corner. A counter next to the fireplace is cluttered with pots,

DEVIL'S WORKSHOP PRESENTS

100 All-New Powers
for every true M&M Superlink™ fan
POWER CORRUPTED
Available at RPGNow.com
M&M SUPERLINK
www.lpjdesign.com

™M&M Superlink, and the M&M Superlink logo are Trademarks of Green Ronin Publishing and are used with permission

a spice rack, a few books, jars of grains and spices, and dried fruits and vegetables. A thick green candle sits on a tiny table next to the door. The area to the south seems to be a bedroom, complete with a large bed on an oval rug. Two merrily burning braziers flank the bed, and a chest and wardrobe abut the wall.

Lashimire relaxes in these rooms as he gets the chance. The kitchen and dining areas are protected by a Trap, but are otherwise unremarkable. The fireplace's chimney is little more than a narrow fissure that winds up through the rock and opens on the island's eastern face. The unlocked wardrobe to the south contains clothing and shoes. The chest is also unlocked and contains linens, but a successful Search check (DC 25) of the interior of the chest reveals a false bottom that contains some Treasure.

Trap: The candle that sits on a table next to the door is trapped. It lights automatically if it is picked up or knocked over. Otherwise, it automatically lights one minute after the room is entered unless someone touches the candle's wick. Once the candle is lit, thick coils of nasty green smoke pour from it—burnt othur fumes! The fumes have a maximum spread from the candle of 40 feet, and can spread into area **3** if the doors between the rooms are open. The fumes remain in the room for 10 minutes before dissipating naturally; until the fumes do so, creatures in the fumes must make Fortitude saving throws each round to avoid the effects of the inhaled poison. The candle is consumed once the trap is triggered.

Poison Candle Trap: CR 10; psionic device; timed trigger (trap activates one minute after room is entered) or touch trigger; repair reset; touch bypass (touch candle's wick within one minute of entering room); gas; multiple targets (all creatures in a 40-foot spread); never miss; onset delay (2 rounds); poison (burnt othur fumes, DC 18 Fortitude save resists, 1 Con drain/3d6 Con); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 30.

Treasure: Lashimire's journal is hidden in the secret compartment in his chest. The journal details his personal life for the past 40 years, and explains how the blood canvas traps, the flesh doors, the *dimensional lock* in area **4**, and the *wall of force* cage in area **5** function. More recent entries describe his theft of the githyanki sword, his discovery of the sunken city, and his association with the sahuagin. The compartment also contains 500 pp in ten small silk pouches, and 26 blocks of nasty-smelling incense. This incense is used in area **2** to temporarily disable the blood canvas traps and to open the main entrance to the complex; it is otherwise worthless.

7. Library

A half-dozen crystalline candles mounted on iron candleholders illuminate this room. A large bookcase with glass doors made of black lacquered wood stands against the west wall, filled with ancient and curious-looking books. An oak desk with three drawers sits in the corner, and near it is a high-backed ebony and maple captain's chair. An open book rests on top of the desk. An iron spiral staircase descends into the floor in the northwest corner of the room.

The entrance to this room is a flesh door identical to those detailed in area **3**.

Lashimire's library is a little damp, due to the nearby sea cave, but the bookcase protects the books within from exposure. Many of the books in the bookcase are valuable, and are detailed below under Treasure.

The open book on the desk is an insidious text Lashimire leaves out to trap unwary intruders. The desk drawers all contain mundane supplies like parchment, inks, and other writing materials.

Anyone who as much as glances at the text in the book opened on the desk must make a successful Will save (DC 20). Success indicates the victim sees only gibberish on the page and is immune to further malice from the book. Failure indicates the victim believes he discovers something in the book that unleashes a flood of horrific memories. The victim believes that he was a subject of manipulation in a horrible case study done by Lashimire many years ago. These memories show how Lashimire repeatedly used psionics to force the victim into performing evil deeds with-

Figurine of Wondrous Power: Opal Frog

This magical figurine functions identically to those detailed on page 256 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. When animated, an *opal frog* transforms into a Medium giant frog under the command of its possessor. If slain, the frog cannot return for one month. Other than that, the owner can call upon the frog twice a week for no more than 12 hours in all. The frog has the following statistics when animated.

Opal Frog: CR 3; Medium animal; HD 5d8+20; hp 42; Init +0; Spd 30 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +7; Atk/Full Atk +7 melee (1d8+6 plus poison, bite) or +7 melee touch (grapple, tongue); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft. (15 ft. with tongue); SA improved grab, poison, swallow whole; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL N; SV ; Str 18, Dex 11, Con 18, Int 1, Wis 9, Cha 6.

Skills: Jump +23, Swim +12.

Feats: Improved Natural Attack (bite), Skill Focus (Jump).

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the opal frog must hit with its tongue attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 16, initial damage 1d4 Strength, secondary damage 2d4 Strength. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Swallow Whole (Ex): The opal frog can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of up to one size smaller by making a successful grapple check. Once inside, the opponent takes 1d4+2points of bludgeoning damage plus 1d6 points of acid damage per round from the frog's digestive juices. A swallowed creature can cut its way out using a light slashing or piercing weapon by dealing 10 points of damage to the frog's digestive tract (AC 12). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. The opal frog's gut can hold 2 Small, 4 Tiny, 8 Diminutive, or 16 Fine or smaller opponents. Any swallowed opponents and gear harmlessly emerge in an adjacent square if the opal frog returns to its figurine form.

Skills: An opal frog gains a +8 racial bonus on Jump checks.

Moderate transmutation; CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, *animate objects*; Price 10,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

out his knowledge. From that point on, the victim continues to believe that his actions are being guided by Lashimire's experiments, and as a result he suffers a constant –4 penalty on Concentration checks, Wisdom-based skill checks, and Initiative checks. This wretched condition can be cured only with *atonement*, *miracle*, *psychic chirurgery*, *reality revision*, or *wish*. Although technically a cursed item, this book is worth 3,000 gp to the right buyer.

Treasure: The bookshelf contains twenty large books with titles like *Psionic Studies*, *Psychoportation*, *Fear and Phobias*, *A Caller in Darkness* (Lashimire's studies on how to create such creatures), *Sunken Utopias*, *Psionic Vampirism*, *Planar Travel*, *Architecture of the Ancients*, *Contemporary Architecture*, *Githyanki Culture*, *Githyanki History*, *Studies on Waterbreathing and the Effects of Drowning*, *Origins and Creation Myths*, and *Disciplines of Zuoken*. Each book weighs five pounds and is worth 250 gp.

8. The Coral Pool (EL 13)

The walls of this damp, cold sea cave are encrusted with brilliantly colored coral. A small beach runs along the eastern end of the cave, but the majority of the cave is filled with frothing sea water. Several small coral reefs protrude here and there from the water. Hundreds, possibly thousands of purple, red, and blue sea urchins cling to every available niche in the coral, further adding to the riot of color in the room.

This sea cave is connected to the ocean by an 8-foot-wide underwater passageway. The pool itself is only 10 feet deep. The urchins that cling to the walls and pool bed are somewhat toxic. Any creature that tries to walk on the bed of urchins (or is pushed into or otherwise bumps into a wall) must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or become nauseated for one minute. As this minute expires, the victim must save again or suffer 2 points of Strength damage. A character that has at least 1 point of natural armor or at least 3 points of armor bonus to his AC is protected enough that the urchin spines cannot harm him.

A strangely rectangular shape can be seen submerged in the pool to the southwest, although noticing it from above the water requires a successful Spot check (DC 30). Remember that characters on the beach suffer a penalty of at least –5 on the check for the distance involved. An underwater character gains a +10 bonus on this Spot check.

The shape is a rectangular case carved out of flat gray stone. The case is extremely heavy and weighs 300 pounds; additionally, its inner surfaces are lined with lead, preventing the detection of any psionic or magic auras within. The case is locked, and can be opened with a successful Open Lock check (DC 30) or with the platinum key Lashimire carries. The case contains the *silver sword* Lashimire stole from the githyanki.

Stone Case: 3-in.-thick stone; Hardness 8; hp 10; break DC 30.

Creatures: Four of Lashimire's sahuagin allies guard the *silver sword* and wait for the psion's return with his *necklace of adaptation*. They lurk in the pool, watching carefully for intrusions both from the spiral stairs and from the underwater tunnel. A character may spot them with a successful Spot check opposed by their Hide checks. Two of these four sahuagin are rangers; their shark animal companions lurk deeper in the escape tunnel.

This group of sahuagin consists of two rangers (Shimoriah and Klarkith) who serve a brutish four-armed barbarian named Olaunau. The fourth sahuagin is a cleric of Sekolah named Yuoagwai. He is Lashimire's primary point of contact with this tribe, and serves as the group's leader, although he tends to defer to Olaunau in matters of tactics and combat. Olaunau loves to fight. He believes he is undefeatable and always fights to the death. He is so violent that even his comrades are somewhat put off by his ferocity. The two rangers each have a blue shark animal companion; the two Medium sharks lurk in the passage leading to the sea, but arrive in the pool here 1d4+1 rounds after blood hits the water.

Yuoagwai is a rarity for sahuagin priests because they are usually female. His main obsession is history and his specific function for his people is to gather knowledge. He is desperate to petition anyone he can to come and see the sunken city. He believes that such a discovery would alter his role in the generally matriarchal structure of Sekolah's church.

Shimoriah and Klarkith, Male Sahuagin Ranger 6 (2): CR 8; Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic); HD 8d8+24; hp 63 each; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., swim 60 ft.; AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +8; Grp +13; Atk +15 melee (1d8+6, *+1 trident*); Full Atk +13/+8 melee (1d8+6, *+1 trident*) and +12/+7 melee (1d4+3, *+1 dagger*) and +11 melee (1d4+2, bite) or +12 ranged touch (entangle, net); SA blood frenzy, favored enemy (elf) +4, favored enemy (aquatic humanoid) +2, rake (+11 melee, 1d4+2), spells; SQ animal companion, blindsense 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., freshwater sensitivity, light blindness, speak with sharks, water dependent, wild empathy +7; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +11, Will +7; Str 20, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills: Handle Animal +10 (+14 sharks), Hide +14 (+18 underwater), Listen +11 (+15 underwater), Ride +14, Spot +11 (+15 underwater), Survival +12 (includes +4 bonus for being within 50 miles of home), Swim +13.

Feats: Endurance[B], Improved Two-Weapon Fighting[B], Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack[B], Track[B], Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting[B], Weapon Focus (trident).

Languages: Common, Sahuagin.

Blood Frenzy (Ex): Once per day, a sahuagin that takes damage in combat can fly into a frenzy in the following round that lasts until it or its opponent is dead. During a frenzy, Shimoriah and Klarkith have the following statistics: hp 71 each; AC 17, touch 11,

flat-footed 14; Grp +14; Atk +16 melee (1d8+7, *+1 trident*); Full Atk +14/+9 melee (1d8+7, *+1 trident*) and +13/+8 melee (1d4+4, *+1 dagger*) and +9 melee (1d4+3, bite) or +12 ranged touch (entangle, net); SA rake (+12 melee, 1d4+3); Fort +9; Str 22, Con 18.

Ranger Spells Prepared (caster level 3rd): 1st—*magic fang, resist energy*.

Possessions: *+1 trident, +1 dagger*, masterwork net.

Yuoagwai, Male Sahuagin Fighter 4/Cleric 4 (Sekolah): CR 10; Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic); HD 6d8+18 plus 4d10+12; hp 78; Init +4; Spd 30 ft., Swim 60 ft.; AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +9; Grp +12; Atk +15 melee (1d8+8, *+2 trident*); Full Atk +15/+10 melee (1d8+8, *+2 trident*) and +10 melee (1d4+1, bite); SA blood frenzy, rake (+10 melee, 1d4+1), spells; SQ blindsense 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., freshwater sensitivity, light blindness, speak with sharks, water dependent; AL LE; SV Fort +11, Ref +5, Will +12; Str 16, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 19, Cha 11.

Skills: Concentration +11, Handle Animal +8 (+12 sharks), Hide +5 (+9 underwater), Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +9 (+13 underwater), Spot +9 (+13 underwater), Survival +13 (includes +4 bonus for being within 50 miles of home), Swim +19.

Feats: Combat Expertise[B], Diehard[B], Endurance[B], Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Multiattack[B], Skill Focus (hide), Weapon Focus (trident)[B], Weapon Specialization (trident).

Languages: Aquan, Common, Sahuagin.

Blood Frenzy (Ex): Once per day, a sahuagin that takes damage in combat can fly into a frenzy in the following round that lasts until it or its opponent is dead. During a frenzy, Yuoagwai has the following statistics: hp 88; AC 13, touch 8, flat-footed 13; Grp +13; Atk +17 melee (1d8+10, *+2 trident*); Full Atk +17/+12 melee (1d8+10, *+2 trident*) and +11 melee (1d4+2, bite); SA rake (+11 melee, 1d4+2); Fort +13; Str 18, Con 18.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 4th): 0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *guidance, read magic, resistance*; 1st—*bane* (DC 15), *cure light wounds, protection from chaos*[D] (DC 15), *shield of faith, summon monster I*; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds, sound burst* (DC 16), *spiritual weapon*[D] (+12 melee), *summon monster II*.

*Domain spell. *Domains*: Domains: Law (cast law spells at +1 caster level), War (proficiency and Weapon Focus with trident).

Possessions: *+2 trident, pearl of power* (1st level), pouch with 26 gp.

Olaunau, Male Sahuagin Barbarian 8: CR 10; Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic); HD 2d8+6 plus 8d12+24; hp 104; Init +3; Spd 40 ft., Swim 60 ft.; AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +10; Grp +16; Atk +16 melee (1d6+6/19–20, talon); Full Atk +16 melee (1d6+6/19–20, 4 talons) and +14 melee (1d4+3, bite); SA blood frenzy; rage 3/day, rake (+14 melee, 1d4+3); SQ blindsense 30 ft., damage reduction 1/—, darkvision 60 ft., freshwater sensitivity, improved uncanny dodge, light blindness, speak with sharks, trap sense +2, water dependent; AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 22, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +8 (+12 underwater), Intimidate +7, Listen +15 (+19 underwater), Ride +11, Spot +7 (+11 underwater), Survival +14 (includes +4 bonus for being within 50 miles of home), Swim +21.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (talon), Improved Natural Attack (talon), Multiattack[B], Weapon Focus (talon).

Languages: Common, Sahuagin.

Blood Frenzied Rage (Ex): Olaunau prefers to fight with his blood frenzy and his barbarian rage activated at the same time. In this state his statistics change as follows: hp 134; AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 17; Grp +19; Atk +19 melee (1d6+9/19–20, talon); Full Atk +19 melee (1d6+9/19–20, 4 talons) and +17 melee (1d4+4, bite); SV Fort +13, Will +5; Str 28, Con 22; Swim +24.

Possessions: *Gauntlets of ogre power, amulet of natural armor +1, ring of protection +1.*

Blue Shark Animal Companions (2): CR —; Medium animal (aquatic); HD 5d8+10; hp 32; Init +3; Spd swim 60 ft.; AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+3, bite); SA —; SQ blindsense 30 ft., evasion, keen scent, link, share spells; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Listen +8, Spot +8, Swim +10.

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Finesse.

Tactics: The sahuagin hide in the pool until the PCs either notice them or enter the pool, at which point the two rangers attempt to use their nets to entangle any arcane spellcasters or archers. Yuoagwai hangs back at first, using his *summon monster* spells and *searing light* at range before casting *shield of faith* and *magic vestment* and entering melee himself. Olaunau's first action in combat is to wound himself by biting one of his arms to trigger his blood frenzy. He activates his barbarian rage next round and engages the nearest enemy. Lashimire has always treated the sahuagin fairly and with respect, and they repay this with unwavering loyalty. They do not retreat from combat, preferring to die in the defense of the *silver sword* if it comes to it.

Treasure: The only contents of the locked case is the sword Lashimire stole from the Githyanki. This potent weapon is named Durak-N'koth, and is a *githyanki silver sword*. These weapons are detailed in the *Monster Manual* on page 128. Note that this sword is a valued treasure by the githyanki. If the PCs keep the sword, they'll have to deal with regular attacks by groups of githyanki sent to retrieve the weapon.

Development: Should the PCs kill Lashimire before he returns here, the sahuagin wait for him for only 2 hours after the PCs first enter the lair, after which they clamber out of the water to look for him in area 7. They know better than to enter area 3, but if they don't find any evidence of Lashimire, they return to their underwater lair to await his contact, taking the *silver sword* with them.

Githyanki Death Squad (EL 14)

Gythra-Kyharz's group of githyanki consists of herself and seven githyanki soulknives. Several days before the adventure begins, she and her soulknife minions *plane shift* to the Material Plane, arriving nearly 100 miles away from their intended destination. She sends three of her soulknives ahead to scout the island and to slay Lashimire's assistant; they cross the water to the isle using *potions of water walk*. Gythra-Kyharz and the other five soulknives arrive on the island after the PCs enter Lashimire's lair. If the PCs slew the soulknives in area **1**, she suspects the PCs' presence but isn't sure what to expect until she encounters them. If the soulknives still live, they rejoin her squad and the group proceeds up the hill to area **2**, where she uses some stolen incense to activate the *phase door* (something she's done several times before on prior visits to her one-time ally). If the PCs have already activated the *phase door*, she and her soulknives enter the rooms below immediately; otherwise, the PCs have about 30 minutes before they must deal with the death squad.

The soulknives attack anyone encountered in Lashimire's abode, assuming them to be guards hired by Lashimire. If Gythra-Kyharz encounters the PCs, though, she allows them an opportunity to convince her that they aren't associated with the psion. Her initial attitude is unfriendly; the results of Diplomacy and Intimidate checks used to adjust this attitude are summarized below.

Creatures: Gythra-Kyharz wears her hair in a topknot heavily beaded with different-colored crystals. Several of the locks are dyed bright red. She is brutal and stops at nothing to reclaim her stolen sword. She cares little for the lives of the soldiers she commands, and doesn't hesitate to sacrifice one or two to gain a tactical combat advantage.

Gythra-Kyharz, Female Githyanki Psychic Warrior 8/Elocater 4: CR 13; Medium humanoid (extraplanar, psionic); HD 8d8+8 plus 4d6+4; hp 66; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +8; Grp +10; Atk +12 melee (2d6+3, masterwork silver greatsword) or +10 ranged (1d10+1 plus 1d6 cold, *+1 frost repeating heavy crossbow*); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (2d6+3, masterwork silver greatsword) or +10/+5 ranged (1d10+1 plus 1d6 cold, *+1 frost repeating heavy crossbow*); SA opportunistic strike +2, psi-like powers, psionics (46 points/day); SQ darkvision 60 ft., dimension step, flanker, githyanki traits, power resistance 17, scorn earth, sidestep charge; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Skills: Autohypnosis +17, Balance +11, Concentration +16, Jump +19, Tumble +10.

Feats: Cleave, Deep Impact, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (repeating crossbow), Mobility, Power Attack, Psionic Weapon, Sidestep Charge[B], Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

Languages: Common, Draconic, Gith.

Dimension Step (Su): Gythra may use *psionic dimension door* once per day; she cannot bring any other creatures with her. This effect operates at caster level 4.

Flanker (Ex): Gythra can designate any adjacent square as the square from which flanking against an ally is determined. She can designate the square at the beginning of her turn or at any time during her turn. The designated square remains her effective square for flanking until she is no longer adjacent to it or until she chooses a different square. She can even choose a square that is impassable or occupied.

Opportunistic Strike (Ex): Gythra gains a +2 insight bonus on attack rolls and damage rolls for the first attack she makes against an opponent that has been dealt damage in melee by another character since her last action.

Scorn Earth (Su): Gythra's feet never touch the ground; she walks upon a cushion of air. As long as she's within 1 foot of a flat surface (solid or liquid) she can take normal actions and make normal attacks, and can move at normal speed. At distances higher than 1 foot above a surface, her speed diminishes to 10 feet per round, and she incurs penalties on melee and ranged attack rolls as if she were levitating.

Psi-Like Abilities (Sp): 3/day—*concealing amorpha, far hand, psionic daze* (DC 12), *psionic dimension door, telekinetic thrust* (DC 15); 1/day—*plane shift*. Caster level 6th.

Psychic Warrior Powers Known (manifester level 11th): 1st—*biofeedback, burst, offensive precognition*; 2nd—*animal affinity, body adjustment, dissolving weapon, hustle*; 3rd—

Gythra-kyharz's Reactions

Adjusted Attitude	Reaction
Hostile	The githyanki believe the PCs are secretly allied with Lashimire and immediately attack them. In this case, Gythra sends the soulknives up to engage them in melee while she provides support with ranged attacks and her psionic powers. Only Lashimire's arrival on the scene wrests her wrath away from the PCs in this event.
Unfriendly	The githyanki don't trust the PCs and demand they leave the complex; if the PCs don't comply, the githyanki become hostile.
Indifferent	The githyanki believe that the PCs aren't allied to Lashimire, but don't trust them anyway. They are allowed to remain in the dungeon as long as they stay out of the way and don't interfere with the squad's mission.
Friendly	The githyanki invite the PCs to form a temporary alliance against Lashimire; they'll accompany them as they explore the complex and aid them in fights. Gythra demands an equal share of treasure for herself, and a share to be split amongst her soulknives.
Helpful	Impressed with the PCs, the githyanki offer a truce; if the PCs promise to help destroy Lashimire and retrieve the stolen sword, they'll help them explore the complex as needed. As long as they allow Gythra to take the *silver sword* when it's found, she does not ask for a share of treasure for herself or the soulknives. Depending on how the PCs act, she may be interested in maintaining the truce with them beyond the scope of this adventure.

mental barrier, vampiric blade; 4th—*energy adaptation, psionic freedom of movement.*

Possessions: Masterwork silver greatsword, *+1 frost repeating heavy crossbow*, 20 bolts, *+2 mithril breastplate, dusty rose ioun stone* (+1 insight bonus to AC), *amulet of health +2.*

Githyanki Soulknife 7 (5): hp 57 each; see area 1 for full statistics.

Lashimire's Return (EL 15)

Lashimire returns to his lair 15 minutes after the PCs enter; his actions and schedule once he returns are detailed in the timeline. If he encounters the PCs before he realizes that someone's intruded on his home, his initial attitude is hostile. His indignation at finding intruders in his lair is such that the PCs have, at most, a round to adjust his initially hostile attitude; remember that Diplomacy and Intimidate checks suffer a –10 penalty if rushed in this manner. If the PCs have obviously destroyed some of his guardians and traps, or have looted his belongings, the check suffers an additional –5 penalty. If, instead, the PCs have already defeated some of the githyanki, the check gains a +5 circumstance bonus.

If he discovers the intrusion into his home before directly confronting the PCs or the githyanki, Lashimire travels to area 8 to enlist the aid of the four sahuagin there. He and the sahuagin then search each room of his lair meticulously for intruders. With these allies, an already dangerous encounter with Lashimire becomes a terrible threat; if the PCs have not allied with the githyanki they would be well advised to flee.

Lashimire has pale wrinkled skin. Veins twist around his forearms, hands, temples, and bald head like tiny purple tree roots. His deep, sunken eyes constantly shift between dark purple, black, and a lifeless gray. He wears a thick robe made from the hide of some leathery skinned creature; branded into the robe are thousands of tiny Draconic symbols.

Lashimire Al' Dtenoré, Male Human Psion (Nomad) 15: CR 15; Medium humanoid (human); HD 15d4+30 plus 12; hp 78; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +7; Grp +7; Atk +8 melee (1d6+1, *+1 parrying quarterstaff*); Full Atk +8/+3 melee (1d6+1, *+1 parrying quarterstaff*); SA psionics (240 points/day); SQ human traits; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +11; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 22, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Concentration +20, Craft (trapmaking) +13, Knowledge (nature) +13, Knowledge (psionics) +20, Knowledge (religion) +21, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Psicraft +26, Ride +11, Survival +14.

Feats: Combat Manifestation, Craft Psionic Arms and Armor, Craft Psionic Construct, Craft Universal Item, Dodge, Expanded Knowledge (*animal affinity*), Expanded Knowledge (*inertial barrier*), Extend Power, Psionic Body, Psionic Dodge, Psionic Meditation.

Universal Item: Torc of Inertial Barrier

This ivory and iron band is worn about the neck. Once per day, as a standard action, it can be used to create a skin-tight barrier of force around your body that resists physical attacks. This effect grants the wearer damage reduction 5/— for 70 minutes. Additionally, the barrier absorbs half the damage you take from any fall.

Moderate psychokinesis; ML 7th; Craft Universal Item, *inertial barrier*; Price 12,000 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Languages: Common, Gith, Sahuagin.

Psion Powers Known (Manifester Level 15th): 1st—*burst, crystal shard* (+9 ranged touch), *defensive precognition, force screen, inertial armor*; 2nd—*animal affinity, biofeedback, id insinuation* (DC 18), *psionic identify, recall agony* (DC 18); 3rd—*body adjustment, energy burst* (DC 19), *psionic blast* (DC 19), *time hop**; 4th—*inertial barrier, mindwipe* (DC 20), *psionic dimension door**, *psionic dimensional anchor* (+9 ranged touch), *psionic fly*; 5th—*power resistance, psionic plane shift**, *psionic teleport**, *psychic crush* (DC 21); 6th—*psionic disintegrate* (+9 ranged touch, DC 22), *retrieve** (DC 22), *temporal acceleration*; 7th—*insanity* (DC 23), *psionic ethereal jaunt**, *psionic phase door*; 8th—*psionic greater teleport**.

*Note that these powers do not function in the *dimensional anchor* effect of Lashimire's abode.

Adjusted Attitude	Reaction
Hostile	Lashimire attacks the PCs.
Unfriendly	Lashimire orders the PCs to leave his home at once; if they do not, he becomes hostile and attacks.
Indifferent	Lashimire orders the PCs to leave his home at once; if they do not, he becomes unfriendly.
Friendly	Lashimire invites the PCs to return to his home at a later date to trade information and possibly form an alliance.
Helpful	Lashimire invites the PCs to accompany him on his excursion to the sunken githyanki city, although they'll need to provide their own magic for underwater exploration.

Adapting the Adventure

Although "The Death of Lashimire" uses lots of material from the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, you can still run the adventure using just the three core books. You'll need to rebuild several stat blocks and replace some magic items and monsters if you do; recommended replacements are listed below.

Psionic Creature	Replace With...
Githyanki soulknife 7	Githyanki fighter 7
Psion-killer	18-HD stone golem
Advanced caller in darkness	16-HD devourer
Gythra-Kyharz	Githyanki Ranger 8/Blackguard 4
Lashimire	Human Wizard 15

Psionic Treasure	Replace With...
3 *brain lock pearls*	One *bead of force*
+1 psychokinetic dagger	*+1 thundering dagger*
dorje of id insinuation	*wand of daze monster*
+1 parrying quarterstaff	*+1 defending quarterstaff*
dorje of energy push	*wand of Melf's acid arrow*

Possessions: +1 parrying quarterstaff, ring of protection +2, headband of intellect +4, gloves of Dexterity +2, pink rhomboid ioun stone (+2 Constitution), *necklace of adaptation, torc of inertial barrier, dorje of energy push* (34 charges), *potion of barkskin +4, potion of displacement*, pouch of 28 gp and 35 pp, platinum key to chest in area 8 (worth 200 gp).

Concluding the Adventure

This adventure is open-ended, in that the PCs' reasons for traveling to Lashimire's lair can vary wildly from campaign to campaign. It may end with Lashimire's destruction and the return of the *silver sword* to the githyanki, or it may end with the PCs successfully defending the lair from the githyanki and making peaceful contact with Lashimire.

As long as the githyanki get their *silver sword* back, their interest in the PCs is fleeting. Not so Lashimire—if the PCs loot his lair and attack him but he survives, he feels that his life's work has been lost. The only way to regain what he has lost, he believes, is to discover the secret of the sunken githyanki city. Alternately, the PCs may learn of the existence of this city and decide to explore it on their own. What secrets, treasures, and menaces await explorers there are up to you. In any case, Lashimire is certain to use what he finds and learns to gain revenge against the PCs for their part in disrupting his plans.

Tim Hitchcock writes, "This is my third published adventure for DUNGEON, *and I'd very much like to thank James Jacobs for converting it to the 3.5 psionic system and finally seeing it through to publication. I love writing d20 material, and the truly curious can check out my bio (or anyone else's for that matter) at http://www.pen-paper.net. I'd like to dedicate this particular piece to my cat Milo, who has recently taken it upon himself to present me with all sorts of creepy little dead things he's been finding in the backyard.*

Scaling the Adventure

Although "The Death of Lashimire" is intended for 12th-level characters, you can adjust the adventure for less powerful mid-level adventurers fairly easily. First, reduce all of the class levels possessed by the NPCs by 1 for each level by which the average party level is lower than 12. Note that if you reduce Lashimire too many levels, many of the traps and creations in his lair become impossible for him to construct; in this case, you can assume that he paid a more powerful psionic ally to aid in their creation.

Remember that lower-level characters have fewer resources, and probably need to retreat, rest, and regroup before exploring all of the areas in Lashimire's lair. If you reduce the levels of the githyanki invaders, they too will need to rest; they may even try to track down the PCs' camp to initiate discussion about their shared goals, or to ambush them.

The blood canvas traps should instead have an *id insinuation* or *confusion* effect rather than *insanity*. Likewise, the damage done by the flesh door *recall agony* trap should be reduced by 2d6 for each level lower than 12th the average party level is. Replace the psion-killer with a magically bound advanced gray glutton (16 HD for a 10th-level party, or 20 HD for an 11th-level party; *Expanded Psionics Handbook* 200). Likewise, you should adjust the caller in darkness' Hit Dice (15 HD for a 10th-level party, or 19 HD for an 11th-level party).

Don't forget to adjust the treasure found in the adventure to more appropriate levels if you reduce the challenges found herein.

THE PORTENT
OK, RUNT! THIS TIME THE SWORD HAD BETTER BE FINISHED.
ERM... SURE, LLOYD, FETCH MR JEFF'S SWORD WILL YA! IT'S THE ONE WITH THE GIFT-WRAPPING.
AAH... OOH... IT IS BEAUTIFUL, YOU HAVE SURPASSED YOURSELVES THIS TIME!
I NEED TO SEE IT OUTSIDE -- TO WATCH THE MAGIC RUNES COME TO LIFE!
SHOULDN'T WE TELL HIM THAT IT'S JUST A FANCY LIGHTNING ROD WE GOT FROM ELF-MART?
NO -- THAT WOULD JUST BE CRUEL. BESIDES, LOOK HOW HAPPY 'E IS.
BOOM!
THE PORTENT 3 © '04 BERGTING

Asylum

Adventure Path
High-level (13–20)
Outer Planes (Carceri) & Dungeon Crawl

By Christopher Perkins
Illustrations by Atilla Adorjany & Eric Kim of UDON • Cartography by Christopher We

The Cagewrights are defeated. The *Tree of Shackled Souls* is no more. Lord Vhalantru has been exposed and put down for the menace he truly was. The town of Cauldron has been saved from volcanic apocalypse. The heroes of Cauldron have earned their place in history, and more than deserve a time of rest, yet fate is not so kind. For the true menace behind the curtain still lives. As long as Adimarchus, the demon prince of madness, continues to dream his haunted dreams and writhe away the years in torment in the fiendish asylum of Skullrot, Cauldron can never be truly safe.

"Asylum" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure designed for four 19th-level characters. It concludes the Shackled City Adventure Path that began with "Life's Bazaar" (*DUNGEON* #97) and continued with "Flood Season" (*DUNGEON* #98), "Zenith Trajectory" (*DUNGEON* #102), "The Demonskar Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104), "Test of the Smoking Eye" (*DUNGEON* #107), "Secrets of the Soul Pillars" (*DUNGEON* #109), "Lords of Oblivion" (*DUNGEON* #111), "Foundation of Flame" (*DUNGEON* #113), "Thirteen Cages" (*DUNGEON* #114), and "Strike on Shatterhorn" (*DUNGEON* #115). If all goes well, the characters should reach 20th level during this adventure, and should be poised for epic levels by its conclusion. When the characters earn enough experience to gain a higher level, allow them to advance during the course of the adventure so that their final quest doesn't lose its momentum.

Adventure Background

For the past several years, a sinister cabal called the Cagewrights has conspired to transform the town of Cauldron into a gateway to the prison plane of Carceri, unleashing the fiendish hordes confined there. The Cagewrights spent years consolidating their power and preparing for a grand ritual of planar junction, using knowledge gleaned from repositories of arcane lore called the Soul Pillars. In preparation for the final ritual, they built artifacts called *soul cages* to hang from a fell device called *Tree of Shackled*

Souls. The town trembled as the ritual drew nigh and events began to unfold as the Cagewrights had planned. Then, unexpectedly, an upstart band of adventurers appeared on the scene and smashed the Cagewrights' designs for Cauldron, destroying the *Tree of Shackled Souls* and slaying many of the cabal's leaders.

The Cagewrights are now scattered, dead or defeated, their plans in ruins and their organization crippled. Yet in the grand scheme of things, they were but a symptom of an evil far greater than any mere mortal organization could hope to achieve; they were inspired, and in many ways created, by the insane demon prince Adimarchus. Players who have worked their way through the Shackled City Adventure Path have no doubt come across his name before, yet this obscure demon prince is an enigma. In "Asylum," his tragic genesis and his current vile incarnation are at last laid to light.

Adventure Synopsis

The adventure begins as the PCs travel to Orthrys, the first layer of Carceri. To prevent the Cagewright menace from returning, the characters must destroy Adimarchus, the inspiring force behind the organization. Traveling to Carceri, the PCs confront Adimarchus in the howling halls of Skullrot, hoping to rid the multiverse of his deranged designs forever.

Chapter One: Spawn of Madness

In the prior adventure ("Strike on Shatterhorn," in *DUNGEON*#115), the PCs defeated the last of the Cagewrights in their secret lair under the ruined yuan-ti stronghold of Shatterhorn. The PCs may have their own reasons for traveling to Carceri after finishing this adventure; some of the Cagewrights may have fled to the prison plane, and if the PCs are particularly unlucky, one of the Cagewrights may have escaped to Carceri with a PC's soul!

If, on the other hand, the PCs managed to defeat the Cagewrights completely, they may not immediately have a reason to venture to Carceri. Likewise, if you're playing "Asylum" as a stand-alone adventure, you'll need other reasons to send the PCs into Orthrys, the first layer of Carceri and the realm in which this adventure takes place.

If you're playing "Asylum" as part of the Shackled City Adventure Path, give the PCs some time to relax and recuperate after their adventures. They may wish to craft magic items, research spells, or aid in the reconstruction of Cauldron. If they're lower than 19th level, you should consider running them on another adventure or two first, so they'll be ready for the challenges ahead.

Once you're ready to begin the adventure, start with "Smoking Eyes" below. This initial encounter can also serve to engage PCs who haven't played prior adventures in the Shackled City Adventure Path; after defeating the resurrected menace in "Smoking Eyes," their interest should be piqued enough for them to travel to Carceri to investigate.

Smoking Eyes (EL 21)

In "Lords of Oblivion" the PCs defeated one of the primary villains in the Shackled City campaign, a beholder named Vhalantru who had infused his body and soul with the spirit of a shator demodand shortly before the climactic battle with the PCs. Vhalantru was most likely slain in this battle, but his mind, like those of the Cagewrights, had been touched by Adimarchus's insanity. The loss of the beholder, and thus the loss of control of Cauldron, was the first in a series of disastrous events for Adimarchus that ultimately led to the Cagewrights' downfall and the failure of the ritual of planar junction that should have opened

a permanent portal between Cauldron and Skullrot. Adimarchus's rage at this loss sent out a powerful wave of insanity into his one-time realm of Occipitus on the Abyss, which reacted immediately by creating a magical duplicate of the slain beholder and infusing it with raw power and Abyssal might.

For some time, the reborn Vhalantru wrestled with confusion and madness. He could not comprehend how he had been destroyed by a band of adventurers, nor did he fully understand how he had come to be in this alien realm. Had his thoughts been entirely his own, Vhalantru could have become the new ruler of this Abyssal layer, yet his already questionable sanity had been shattered. Memories of his defeat at the PCs' hands seethed in him, tore at him, and he turned all his power and might toward revenge.

It wasn't long before he realized he had also gained some control over the very chaos and evil of Occipitus. Having been "born" of the realm, he had gained the Sign of the Smoking Eye, a guttering flame where his central eye had been. Using these powers, he began to dominate Occipitus and bend it to his will. Before long, he encountered one of the realm's most tragic inhabitants, the fallen astral deva Saureya. It took the beholder several days to break through Saureya's cynicism and lingering tatters of purity, but eventually his ministrations bent the fallen angel to his will and he agreed to use *plane shift* to send Vhalantru back to the Material Plane.

Creature: Vhalantru is, in many ways, a fragment of the beholder he once was. His scheming brilliance, his gift for deception, and his long–term goals are gone, replaced by a relentless urge to destroy the PCs and avenge his defeat. *Plane shift* doesn't send creatures exactly to where they want to go, so it takes Vhalantru some time to return to Cauldron. When he arrives, though, he wastes no time. He's unsure of where the PCs are, but figures that they remain Cauldron's heroes. If Cauldron was destroyed in "Thirteen Cages" his rage builds greater; he may have been evil, but Cauldron was his home too, and he blames its ruin on the PCs.

Vhalantru knows the region well, and it shouldn't take him long to find the refugees. Once he does, he begins a frothing frenzy of destruction, charming citizens and setting them against each other in battle, disintegrating building supports, hurling burning timbers with *telekinesis*, and killing and petrifying anyone who tries to get in his way. As he does, he roars out the PCs' names amidst a storm of curses and sputtering epithets. Vhalantru's attack should occur when the PCs are together and nearby; they should hear of his assault soon after it begins. Practical PCs might take the time to cast preparatory spells; compassionate ones probably rush to fight the beholder immediately to prevent it from hurting more innocents. If you find the PCs are taking too long to prepare their spells (more than a minute is certainly too long), feel free to have Vhalantru discover where they are (perhaps from charmed townsfolk) and bring the fight to them.

If the PCs respond to his challenge, the beholder roars in rage as he notices them and attacks. If they ignore him, Vhalantru can do an amazing amount of damage before he is eventually slain. But killing the beholder won't solve the problem forever.

Vhalantru is a 16-foot-diameter bloated sphere of red pulsating leathery flesh covered with tiny spines and dull chitinous plates. His central eye has been replaced with a ball of flame that gives off no heat and does not burn the surrounding flesh. Plumes of bitter smoke leak upward from the burning socket, yet the eye still functions as normal. Although his Abyssal rebirth has significantly increased his size and strength, Vhalantru should still be readily recognizable to PCs that have encountered him before.

Vhalantru, Fiendish Smoking Eye Advanced Beholder: CR 21; Huge aberration (extraplanar); HD 33d8+198; hp 346; Init +6; Spd 5 ft., fly 20 ft. (good); AC 28, touch 10, flat-footed 28; Base Atk +24; Grp +39; Atk/Full Atk +26 ranged touch (eye ray) and +27 melee (2d6+6, bite); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SA eye rays (DC 32), smite good 1/day (+20 damage); SQ all-around vision, antimagic cone, damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., flight, resistance to cold 10, resistance to fire 10, spell resistance 25; AL CE; SV Fort +19, Ref +15, Will +23; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 18.

Skills: Hide +30, Knowledge (arcana) +39, Listen +38, Search +41, Spot +40.

Feats: Ability Focus (eye ray), Alertness[B], Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Flyby Attack, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (ray).

Languages: Common, Elven, Infernal, Undercommon.

Eye Rays: The effects of Vhalantru's eye rays manifest at caster level 14.

Note: The Sign of the Smoking Eye template appears in DUNGEON #107, but all pertinent details are reprinted in the stat block above. Also, although Vhalantru had the Tarterian creature template and was missing his *inflict moderate wounds* eyestalk the last time the PCs fought him, his rebirth on Occipitus has both removed the prior template and restored his missing eyestalk.

Tactics: As Vhalantru's attack can occur anywhere, no maps are provided for this encounter. If you have prior Adventure Path installments handy, you can use the street maps for the Umber Hulk Attack (page 34 of DUNGEON #102) or the Riot Scene (page 51 of DUNGEON #104). Vhalantru's attention shifts to the PCs once they arrive. Remember that he knows the PCs and their capabilities quite well. He tries to keep spellcasters in the zone of his antimagic eye, uses his *charm monster*, *charm person*, *fear*, *inflict moderate wounds*, *sleep*, and *slow* eye rays on fighters and other characters with good Fortitude

saves, and uses his *finger of death*, *flesh to stone*, and *disintegrate* eyes on others. If a PC seems to be particularly efficient at damaging him with a weapon, he'll use his *telekinesis* eye to attempt to disarm the character. Vhalantru knows that if he dies, he'll soon be reborn on Occipitus, and thus fights to the death without fear. Nevertheless, he fights using his Combat Expertise feat to full effect in order to maximize his time on the Material Plane.

Development: Vhalantru is a tough opponent; if the PCs are having a tough time with him, you should consider augmenting their strength with other powerful local NPCs like Jenya Urikas or Nidrama. You should also consider running them through another adventure before running the rest of "Asylum." If the PCs can't handle Vhalantru, they'll have a tough time with what awaits them on Carceri.

If Vhalantru is slain, his body vanishes in 33 rounds, reappearing dead but intact on Occipitus. If Adimarchus still lives, it is only a few weeks before another surge of the demon prince's insanity reaches Occipitus and restores the beholder to life, at which point he begins his quest for revenge against the PCs again. Quick-thinking PCs can use spells like *dimensional anchor* or *dimensional lock* to prevent the body from returning to Occipitus for as long as the spell lasts. Simply destroying the body before it returns does not stop the death-to-life cycle.

Even if the PCs manage to permanently prevent Vhalantru's body from returning to Occipitus to be reborn, they'll have only gained a small reprieve. Adimarchus's insanity simply targets other villains and minions. In time, the PCs could find themselves facing reborn Cagewrights or any other villains from the Shackled City Adventure Path like Hookface, Tongueater, or Kaurophon. Only by destroying Adimarchus can this destructive cycle be broken.

The Final Enemy Revealed

With the reborn Vhalantru put down (even if temporarily), the PCs should realize that something still remains of the Cagewright menace. Unfortunately, no one on the Material Plane can provide further information. The PCs must turn to divination magic to learn more. If none of the PCs can cast spells like *divination*, *commune*, or *contact other plane*, Jenya Urikas, local high priestess of St. Cuthbert, can intervene with a *commune* spell.

You should use the results of these divination spells to steer the PCs toward Carceri. The one thing that they shouldn't discover as the result of these spells, though, is Skullrot's exact location. In order to prevent Adimarchus' release, Graz'zt went through great effort to imbue the asylum with wards and protection against discovery via magic. Although the deities themselves may know of its location, mere mortal magic such as *commune* or *discern location* cannot provide more information about Skullrot other than that it is located on the first layer of Carceri—Orthrys.

Listed below are key pieces of information you should strive to provide the PCs when they begin researching the situation; this information may come about as the result of multiple spells, but if the PCs ask intelligent questions, you should make sure to reward them with the following points.

1) Adimarchus is the true enemy—the driving force behind the Cagewrights. His name had been hidden from magic and divination for the past 50 years, but the defeat of his favored minions (the Cagewrights) has weakened these restraints.

2) Adimarchus is imprisoned in Skullrot, a mighty asylum hidden somewhere on the first layer of Carceri (Orthrys). The exact location of this asylum remains hidden from magic.

3) The defeat of the Cagewrights has driven Adimarchus's insanity to new levels of power; his madness can now "leak" out of his asylum to be funneled into his one-time lair of Occipitus (the 507th layer of the Abyss). Given enough time, these "insanity leaks" can engineer a method of releasing him.

4) Vhalantru's resurrection is a direct result of Adimarchus's insanity working on the malleable features of Occipitus. As long as Adimarchus exists, his insanity can infinitely re-create the beholder (and possibly other enemies) from the raw stuff of Occipitus.

5) Although Skullrot's location on Orthrys cannot be divined by magic, it can be learned through physical means. Unfortunately, those few who know the way to Skullrot are imprisoned on Orthrys already. To discover Skullrot's location, one must travel to Orthrys and learn the way from one of those imprisoned there.

Unexpected Assistance (EL 16)

Before the PCs leave for Carceri, they are contacted by someone they might have forgotten—Nidrama, the angelic guardian of the Cauldron region. Vhalantru's assault on the PCs and the Cauldron refugees did not go unnoticed by Nidrama, but as has happened many times before, ancient (and as Nidrama is fond of saying, outdated) strictures and rules governing celestial intervention in mortal affairs prevented her from stepping in to provide aid. She took a risk in attempting to aid the PCs before ("The Demonskar Legacy" in *DUNGEON* #104), to the great displeasure of her superiors. With the reborn Vhalantru's attack, Nidrama finally has had enough and decides to throw in her lot with the PCs.

Creature: Nidrama is a movanic deva, one of many angels charged with observing and representing the needs of the Positive Energy Plane, the Negative Energy Plane, and the Material Plane. Nidrama's charge is the region surrounding Cauldron. She observed the transformation of the spell weaver city into the Demonskar, the fall of the yuan-ti empire around Shatterhorn, and the demise of the powerful frost giant Jarl Khurok. And recently, she observed the rise in power of the Cagewrights and their destruction by the PCs.

She has perfectly white skin and stern, sparkling silver eyes. A pair of feathered wings spreads out behind her back and she wields a flaming greatsword. Although not very tough compared to the heroes, she comes with an array of useful spell-like abilities and some knowledge of the planes, and can provide welcome support to the characters during their travels and exploration of Carceri.

Nidrama presents herself to the PCs not long after they decide they must travel to Carceri to finish off Adimarchus, begging their understanding for her delay in coming to Cauldron's aid and offering her skills and sword to them in any way they need to further their chances against the prisoner of Skullrot. If the PCs include obviously evil characters, Nidrama still offers her ser-

New Feat— Practiced Magic

Your spell-like abilities are more powerful.

Prerequisite: Spellcraft 4 ranks, spell-like abilities.

Benefit: Your caster level for your spell-like abilities increases by +4. This can't increase your caster level for spell-like abilities beyond your Hit Dice. However, even if you can't benefit from the full bonus immediately, if you later gain non-caster-level Hit Dice you may be able to apply the rest of the bonus.

If you have spellcasting ability from multiple sources (from gained templates or from a character class) you must choose which set of spell-like abilities gain the feat's effect.

This does not affect how often you can use your spell-like abilities in a day. It only increases your caster level, which would help you penetrate spell resistance, increases the duration and damage of some spells, and so on.

Special: You may select this feat multiple times. Each time you choose it, you must apply it to a different set of spell-like abilities.

vices to the PCs as long as the predominant party alignment is good or neutral, but she keeps an eye on evil characters and does her best to treat them fairly and honorably in an attempt to teach them the error of their ways without preaching to them. If the majority of the party is evil, you may wish to replace Nidrama with a different outsider the PCs may have encountered in the past who nonetheless would like to see Adimarchus defeated. One likely alternate is Aushanna, the erinyes guardian of the shrine to the Sea Mother ("Zenith Trajectory," *Dungeon* #102).

Since her encounter with the PCs some time ago, Nidrama has known in her heart that she would eventually go against the will of her superiors and ignore celestial law to aid the PCs in whatever way she could. To prepare for this event, she has spent the intervening time training and honing her skills; although she is still a fair bit less powerful than the PCs, she is quite a bit more powerful than she was during their last meeting. One unfortunate (although by no means unforeseen by Nidrama) result of her rebellion against celestial law is the fact that she is now a fallen deva, and no longer has the direct support of the celestial host. She has lost several of her spell-like abilities and her protective aura special quality as a result, and her weapons are not automatically treated as good-aligned for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. Nevertheless, her ability to cast *aid*, *death ward*, and *prayer* at will makes her an invaluable ally.

Nidrama, Fallen Movanic Deva, Fighter 6: CR 16; Medium outsider (extraplanar, good); HD 6d8+24 plus 6d10+24; hp 108; Init +7; Spd 40 ft., fly 90 ft. (good); AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +12; Grp +17; Atk +19 melee (2d6+10 plus 1d6 fire, *+1 flaming burst greatsword*); Full Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (2d6+10 plus 1d6 fire, *+1 flaming burst greatsword*); SA spell-like abilities; SQ celestial traits, damage reduction 10/evil, darkvision 60 ft., divine equilibrium, fire resistance 20, heavenly deflection, immune to acid, immune to cold, immune to electricity, soothing presence of nature, spell resistance 19; AL CG; SV Fort +14, Ref +10, Will +13; Str 20, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 17, Wis 19, Cha 24; *Fiend Folio* 57.

Skills: Balance +14, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +18, Handle Animal +19, Intimidate +20, Jump +7, Knowledge (history) +13, Knowledge (religion) +13, Knowledge (the planes) +13, Listen +13, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +12, Spot +13, Tumble +9.

Feats: Cleave, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Practiced Magic, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*bless weapon*), Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword).

Languages: Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*aid, continual flame, create food and water, death ward, detect evil, discern lies* (DC 21), *polymorph, prayer, protection from arrows*; 3/day—quickened *bless weapon, cure serious wounds, daylight, divination, ethereal jaunt, neutralize poison, plane shift* (DC 22), *remove curse, remove disease, remove fear*; 1/day—*raise dead*. Caster level 12th.

Divine Equilibrium (Ex): Nidrama is immune to the effect of negative or positive planar energy traits.

Heavenly Deflection (Su): Once per round, Nidrama can deflect ranged attacks, rays or single target spells with her *+1 flaming burst greatsword*. To do this, she must succeed in a Reflex save (DC 20 plus enhancement bonus of the attack or spell level).

Soothing Presence of Nature (Ex): Animals and plants may attack Nidrama only if magically compelled.

Possessions: *+1 flaming burst greatsword, ring of protection +2, boots of teleportation.*

Development: Nidrama is open and honest with the PCs now. If asked why she hasn't helped the PCs more before this, she grows weary and sad, saying only that she lacked the courage until now to go against celestial law. She's abandoned her place in the celestial hierarchy in favor of directly intervening in mortal matters, and she's not willing to risk possible friendship and alliance with the PCs by further withholding information. Nidrama knows much about the Cagewrights, Adimarchus, and the history of Cauldron. Although not even she knows Skullrot's precise location, you can use her to answer any other outstanding questions the PCs may have about the Shackled City Adventure Path as you see fit.

If one of the PCs' souls was stolen by Embril at the end of "Strike on Shatterhorn," you may want to let that player run Nidrama until his actual character is rescued.

The Tarterian Depths of Carceri

Hatred, betrayal, and despair suffuse the bleak plane of Carceri. Many of the creatures that dwell here are petitioners and exiles that have given up all hope of escape. Portals on many planes allow travel to Carceri, but almost none allow travel in the other direction. Only creatures with the ability to *plane shift* or the wherewithal to sail the River Styx hold any hope of escape.

Before they travel to Orthrys, the PCs may wish to research the layer. A successful Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 20) means the character knows a fair amount about the plane (approximately the same amount of information contained on page 161 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, in fact). Nidrama can provide this information if she is with the party. Once the characters have a working knowledge of Carceri, a second Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 30) allows them to narrow the field a bit to two key locations on Orthrys that might contain information about the location of Skullrot. If none of the PCs make this roll, this information can be learned with several days of study in a well-stocked library. Two locations in particular seem likely to offer information about Skullrot. The first is the Bastion of Lost Hope—an outpost for anarchists and a marketplace for all sorts of goods; the PCs might be able to buy information about Skullrot's location here. The second is Harrowfell—a terrible tower said to contain a gemstone that grants *mind blank* to those who touch it, and said to be ruled by a strange marilith demon with a smoking left eye. (Although Adimarchus and Occipitus are not mentioned, the smoking eye marilith should clue the PCs in that she has some ties to the demon prince of madness.)

For more information on the plane of Carceri, consult page 161 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* or pages 104–108 of the *Manual of the Planes*.

Exploring Orthrys

Characters who *plane shift* to Carceri arrive in a random location on Orthrys, Carceri's first layer. (If they use an *amulet of the planes* or *lesser amulet of the planes*, they can pinpoint their destination, so long as they know where they're going.) Orthrys is a realm of vast bogs and quicksand. The River Styx runs freely through the layer, saturating the ground with its magic. Fetid swamps thrive where the river does not flow, and though patches of dry ground exist, they are rare and usually climb swiftly to rugged mountains. The perpetually crimson sky paints the jagged mountains and stinking bogs of Orthrys in a hellish light, and swarms of insects feast upon travelers indiscriminately.

Terrain: Orthrys consists of vast bogs with quicksand pits, rocky crags, and rugged mountains. For rules on moving through bogs and quicksand, see Marsh Terrain on page 88 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*; for rules on traveling through rugged mountain terrain, see Mountain Terrain on page 89 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.

Encounters: If the PCs find themselves slogging through the swamps or exploring some of the layer's important sites, roll for random encounters every hour using the Orthrys Random Encounters table, below. Do not use any given encounter more than once. If you need further encounters, you can use these four as templates.

Orthrys Random Encounters

d%	Encounter	EL
01–25	Demodand squad	15
36–50	Demon troupe	18
51–75	Slaadi gang	15
76–100	Stygian marauders	18

Demodand Squad (EL 19)

Demodands are the self-appointed keepers of the Carcerian population. Jailers and wardens of the prison plane, they are themselves trapped here as surely as the petitioners they watch. This demodand squad consists of a huge, wrinkled shator and nine lean, tar-oozing farastus. Demodands are roughly humanoid in shape, with fiendish faces and sharp claws.

This squad is traveling to Skullrot to pay tribute to its warden, Dark Myrakul. They have a single prisoner they intend to offer up as a sacrifice to the warden: a half-celestial human paladin named Kharidian. Kharidian is currently at 0 hit points and stuck fast to one of the farastus, encased in the demodand's adhesive slime. If rescued, he helps the characters complete their quest to the best of his ability, giving his life if necessary to save one of theirs.

Although these demodands know the way to Skullrot, they won't reveal its location to others unless magically compelled (and doing so is against their nature, possibly granting the compelled or charmed demodand an additional save to throw off the enchantment). The surest way to learn of Skullrot's location is to silently stalk the demodands, following them to their eventual destination. Of course, the PCs have no real way of knowing where they're going without using magic.

Kharidian, Male Half-Celestial Human, Paladin 9: hp 90 (0 currently); *Monster Manual* 145.

Shator Demodand: CR 16; Large outsider (evil, extraplanar); HD 15d8+60; hp 127; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., fly 70 ft. (poor); AC 28, touch 15, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +15; Grp +25; Atk +22 melee (2d6+11, +2 *guisarme*) or +20 melee (1d6+6 plus paralysis, claw); Full Atk +22/+17/+12 melee (2d6+11, +2 *guisarme*) or +20 melee (1d6+6 plus paralysis, 2 claws) and +18 melee (2d6+3 plus paralysis, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft. (20 ft. with +2 *guisarme*); SA paralyzing slime, spell-like abilities, spells, *summon demodand*; SQ darkvision 120 ft., damage reduction 15/good, freedom of movement, immune to acid, immune to cold, immune to fire, immune to mind-affecting effects, immune to poison, outsider traits, scent, see invisibility, spell resistance 30; AL NE; SV Fort +13, Ref +11, Will +12; Str 23, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 21; *Fiend Folio* 45.

Skills: Bluff +20, Concentration +19, Diplomacy +24, Disguise +20 (+22 acting), Gather Information +7, Hide +17, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (local) +18, Knowledge (the planes) +18, Listen +20, Move Silently +17, Search +17, Sense Motive +21, Spot +20, Survival +3 (+5 following tracks or on other planes).

Feats: Alertness, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Improved Trip, Multiattack, Spell Penetration.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Demodand, Infernal.

Paralyzing Slime (Ex): Fortitude save (DC 21) or become paralyzed for 3d6 rounds. A

shator may spit a globule of slime as a +17 ranged touch attack with a range of 30 feet.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): At will—*detect magic, clairaudience/clairvoyance, fear* (DC 19), *invisibility, spider climb, tongues*; 3/day—*cloudkill* (DC 20), *fog cloud, ray of enfeeblement* (+17 ranged touch), *stinking cloud* (DC 18); 2/day—*dispel magic*; 1/day—*mass charm monster* (DC 23). Caster level 15. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Spells Known (as 8th-level sorcerer; 6/8/7/6/4): 0—*dancing lights, daze* (DC 15), *flare* (DC 15), *ghost sound, read magic, mage hand, open/close, ray of frost* (+17 ranged touch); 1st—*charm person* (DC 16), *mage armor, magic missile, obscuring mist, true strike*; 2nd—*bull's strength, detect thoughts* (DC 17), *Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 17); 3rd—*blink, fireball* (DC 18); 4th—*confusion* (DC 19).

***Summon Demodand* (Sp)**: Once per day, a shator can attempt to summon 1d2 shators with a 30% chance of success, or either 1d4 kelubars or 1d6 farastus (shator's choice) with a 70% chance of success.

Farastu Demodands (9): CR 11; Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar); HD 11d8+22; hp 68; Init +5; Spd 40 ft.; AC 25, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +11; Grp +23; Atk +15 melee (1d4+4, claw); Full Atk +15 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws) and +10 melee (1d6+2, bite); SA adhesive slime, improved grab, rage, spell-like abilities, *summon demodand*; SQ cold resistance 10, damage reduction 10/good, fire resistance 10, freedom of movement, immune to acid, immune to poison, scent, spell resistance 23; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 16; *Fiend Folio* 42.

Skills: Climb +22, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +6, Hide +12, Intimidate +16, Listen +14, Move Silently +12, Search +10, Sense Motive +12, Spot +14, Survival +1 (+3 following tracks).

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Languages: Abyssal, Demodand.

Adhesive Slime (Ex): The black slime farastus exude grants them a +8 racial bonus on grapple checks and disarm checks. A weapon that strikes a farastu becomes stuck fast unless the wielder succeeds on a Reflex save (DC 17). Prying off a stuck weapon requires a Strength check (DC 17). Oil dissolves the farastu's adhesive slime; it requires 10 minutes to renew its adhesive coating. It can also dissolve its slime at will, and the substance breaks down 1 minute after the creature dies.

Rage (Ex): The farastu can fly into a rage three times per day, much like a barbarian. The farastu gains +4 Strength, +4 Constitution, +2 on Will saves, and –2 AC. Its statistics change as follows: hp 93; AC 23, touch 9, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +13; Grp +25; Atk +17 melee (1d4+6, claw); Full Atk +17 melee (1d4+6, 2 claws) and +12 melee (1d6+3, bite); SV Fort +11, Will +10; Str 23, Con 18; Climb +24. The rage lasts for 7 rounds, but the farastu can end it earlier if it desires. It is not fatigued at the end of its rage.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic, clairaudience/clairvoyance, fear* (DC 17), *invisibility, tongues*; 3/day—*fog cloud, ray of enfeeblement* (+12 ranged touch); 2/day—*dispel magic*. Caster level 11th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

***Summon Demodand* (Sp)**: Once per day, a farastu can attempt to summon 1d4 farastus with a 30% chance of success.

Skills: A farastu's adhesive slime gives it a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks.

Demon Troupe (EL 18)

This demon troupe is wandering Orthrys looking for trouble. It consists of a nalfeshnee, four hezrous, and six vrocks.

Nalfeshnee: hp 175; *Monster Manual* 45.

Hezrous (4): hp 138 each; *Monster Manual* 44.

Vrocks (6): hp 115 each; *Monster Manual* 48.

Slaadi Gang (EL 15)

Like the demons, slaadi on Orthrys typically wander about looking for trouble. This gang consists of a death slaad, two gray slaadi, and four blue slaadi.

Death Slaad: hp 142; *Monster Manual* 231.

Gray Slaadi (2): hp 95 each; *Monster Manual* 231.

Blue Slaadi (4): hp 68 each; *Monster Manual* 229.

Stygian Marauders (EL 18)

Stygian marauders are tiefling outlaws who prey on travelers and pillage battlefields near the River Styx. They ride on nightmares.

Stygian Marauders, Tiefling Fighter 2/Rogue 10 (6): CR 13; Medium outsider (native); HD 2d10+2 plus 10d6+10; hp 72 each; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +9; Grp +11; Atk +12 melee (1d8+3/19–20, *+1 longsword*) or +14 ranged (1d8+1/×3, masterwork longbow with *+1 dementia arrow*); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+3/19–20, *+1 longsword*) or +14/+9 ranged (1d8+1/×3, masterwork longbow with *+1 dementia arrow*); SA *darkness* 1/day, sneak attack +5d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., improved evasion, improved uncanny dodge, resistance to cold 5, resistance to electricity 5, resistance to fire 5, trap sense +3, trapfinding; AL CE; Fort +7, Ref +11, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +6, Bluff +12, Climb +7, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +10 (+12 acting in character), Hide +16, Intimidate +17, Jump +4, Listen +9, Ride +19, Spot +9, Tumble +14.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Quick Draw, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Ride-By Attack.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Infernal.

Possessions: *+1 studded leather armor, +1 light steel shield, +1 longsword*, masterwork longbow, 20 *dementia arrows*, tanglefoot bag, *potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of neutralize poison*.

Nightmares (6): hp 45 each; *Monster Manual* 194.

Orthrys Site I: The Bastion of Lost Hope

A fortress made of black igneous rock squats in a mountain range. The ambient, reddish light of Orthrys lends the place a brooding air of menace. Only one entrance offers itself, a portal that one can't help but notice strongly resembles the maw of a massive demonic toad.

No one person rules the Bastion. Instead, it serves as an outpost for anarchists and a haven for some of the worst traitors ever to cross the planes. Here a traveler can obtain all manner of nefarious goods and services. Visitors to the Bastion would do well to remember that they're on a plane of liars and traitors, and to trust no one within its walls. Demodands, Stygian marauders, night hags, and worse can be found here, either plying a trade or shopping. Obviously good-aligned crea-

New Weapon Quality—Dementia

Dementia weapons usually appear charcoal gray in color. Additionally, a creature critically hit by a dementia weapon must make a successful Will save (DC 16) or be confused for 7 rounds (as the *confusion* spell).

Moderate enchantment (compulsion); CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *confusion*; Price +2 bonus.

tures (such as Nidrama or a paladin) aren't particularly welcome here, but if they can adjust the residents' initial attitude of unfriendly to helpful, the merchants agree to take their coin as well. As a general rule, several hundred customers and merchants can be found here, many of them fairly powerful. Characters starting a fight here should find themselves quickly outnumbered and overwhelmed.

Information: Information is pricy at the Bastion; each attempt to Gather Information requires a bribe of at least 2,000 gp. The information brokers of the Bastion are perfectly willing to accept payment in magic items, but they don't give change. With a successful Gather Information check (DC 20), a character can learn some facts about the plane's "movers and shakers." With a successful DC 30 check, they can also learn the location and powers of certain planar touchstones, such as the tower of Harrowfell (see below).

Anyone who asks about Skullrot is met with poorly-concealed claims of ignorance. A bribe of at least 10,000 gp (or equivalent worth in magic items) and a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 30) is required to get any further information. A successful skill check and bribe is enough to learn the asylum's location, but little more.

Equipment: The Bastion's gp limit for purchasing magic items and equipment is 40,000 gp, although prices are generally double the normal asking price.

Orthrys Site 2: Harrowfell (EL 18)

A sixty-foot-tall, twenty-foot-diameter tower stands atop a rocky crag, surrounded on all sides by bone-strewn battlefields and fetid quagmires. A fence of skull-capped spears follows a twenty-foot-long rough-hewn staircase leading from the bog up to the tower's entrance, which stands agape. The tower itself is made of broken weapons, armor, and bones, held together by terrible magic.

This appalling tower is built around the top of the rocky crag. The tower is hollow, and sprouting from the crag's peak is a 9-foot-tall black crystal vaguely resembling a great black blade split down the middle. Travelers come to Harrowfell to touch the V-shaped crystal and gain its power. Any creature that touches the crystal gains the benefits of a *mind blank* spell for 24 hours (caster level 20).

Creatures: This tower is currently held by a troupe of demons led by a cynical marilith named Byakala. Once one of Adimarchus's generals, Byakala was ironically imprisoned in Carceri by the demon prince only a few months before he was himself trapped here. Byakala has consigned herself to her fate, and for many decades has claimed Harrowfell as her own. She has gathered several lesser demons to her side as minions, and charges visitors steep prices for the honor of using the crystal at the tower's peak. Normal prices are either 2,000 gp (or the equivalent in magic items) or a live humanoid (to be used as food or worse).

Byakala and her demons make a point of using the crystal every day, and are always under the effects of a *mind blank* as a result. Although Byakala's left eye is a burning, smoking orb, she doesn't actually have the Smoking Eye template. Adimarchus once granted his generals the physical manifestation of the smoking eye as a badge of office. Her long stay in Carceri has left her bitter, and as long as visitors don't insult or threaten her, she has little interest in starting fights.

- **Byakala, Marilith Demon**: hp 216; *Monster Manual* 44.
- **Hezrou Demons (2)**: hp 138 each; *Monster Manual* 44.
- **Babau Demons (5)**: hp 66 each; *Monster Manual* 40.

Development: If one of the characters acquired the Sign of the Smoking Eye template as a consequence of completing "Test of the Smoking Eye" (*DUNGEON* #107), Byakala assumes (perhaps wrongly) that the character has assumed lordship of Occipitus, the 507th layer of the Abyss. She tries to parley with the character, curious to know what brings the new lord of Occipitus to the Tarterian depths, and she is secretly hopeful the new lord has come to free her. If the character has not claimed lordship of Occipitus but tries to convince the demons otherwise, he must succeed at a Bluff check. If the check fails, the demons attack. If the check succeeds, the demon troupe reports that a vast army of trapped fiends has recently dispersed throughout Orthrys, having failed in its latest bid to escape the plane (this army is the same one the Cagewrights failed to release). Byakala's lost any interest in serving demonic masters, and under no circumstances does she agree to join forces with the PCs. If the PCs pressure her to join, she grows angry and attacks them rather than risk becoming someone's minion once again.

If, on the other hand, the PCs tell Byakala they've come to Carceri to destroy Adi-

marchus, she reacts with disbelief. With a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 30), though, the PCs can convince her of their sincerity, at which point she grows visibly excited. Too cowardly to stand against the demon prince herself, the thought of him being put down greatly appeals to her sense of vengeance. She knows the way to Skullrot, and gladly gives directions to the asylum once she believes the PCs.

Chapter Two: Skullrot

Murky, stench-ridden bogs surround the asylum of Skullrot, extending for miles in every direction. Swarms of large black mosquitoes, more annoying than dangerous, hound creatures attempting to cross the black quagmire. The swamp surrounding the asylum is vast and trackless; once the PCs get directions to the place they can use spells like *greater teleport* to travel there quickly. If the PCs are forced to use more mundane means for travel, they'll need to traverse 3d6×100 miles of stinking swamp to reach Skullrot. The swamp is fairly dangerous, and those traveling through it have a 15% chance per day of an encounter with one of its denizens. These encounters can be with one of the random encounters from Chapter One, or with other encounters you design. Fiendish black dragons, demons, demodands, half-fiend 30-HD krakens, and worse are said to lurk therein.

As characters approach within 5 miles of the asylum, they notice trampled reeds and crisscrossing tracks. Within 1 mile of the asylum, they stumble upon the bloated, maggot-ridden corpses of slaughtered fiends. Had the Cagewrights' plot to open a portal between Carceri and the Material Plane succeeded, the gate would have formed near the asylum. When word of the plot reached the denizens of Carceri, fiends converged on the asylum in droves, hoping to be among the first to cross over. When the portal failed to open, the fiends turned on each other, leaving behind a bloody mess. Characters searching the carcasses find little of value; the victors of the battle have long since looted the dead.

The Howling Halls of Skullrot

A bare black rock rises above the fetid quagmire, and upon it stands a towering

white edifice over 200 feet high. Frightful screams and howls fill the air around the structure. Dozens of iron cages hang from bone spurs along the outside walls of the upper floors, each one holding a humanoid skeleton or corpse. Four massive, horned skulls surmount the structure.

Skullrot looms high above the stench-ridden swamps of Orthrys and can be seen from a mile away. The entire building is made from fiendish skulls cemented together with hard resin. Four massive goristro demon skulls are fixed to the uppermost floor, glowering menacingly into the tortured sky.

The skull walls have the strength and consistency of stone, yet they are porous, allowing the wails of mad fiends to carry beyond. The dangling cages are grisly to behold and serve to ward off spirits and other unwanted visitors.

Skullrot embodies the eternal despair and hopelessness of Carceri. Fiends and wayward souls driven mad by futile attempts to escape can be found here, locked away for all time. Skullrot also serves as a prison for beings deemed too dangerous to roam free and too valuable to kill, chief among them the demon prince Adimarchus. Dark Myrakul, his fiendish annis assistant Slouva, and a host of flesh golems and demodands mind the asylum and its deranged residents.

Skullrot Features

The following features are common throughout Skullrot unless noted otherwise:

Walls, Floors, and Ceilings: Skullrot is made entirely of fiendish skulls, cemented together with hardened resin (excreted by what remains a mystery). The walls, floors, and ceilings have the strength of magically treated masonry, yet they are porous. Characters in gaseous form can pass through walls as easily as they move through open air, and the constant howls and screams of Skullrot's incarcerated fiends can be heard throughout the structure and even in the surrounding swamp. Ceilings are 20 feet high throughout the asylum.

Skull Walls: 1 ft. thick; Hardness 16; hp 180 (per 10-foot-by-10-foot section); Break DC 55; Climb DC 15. Since they are not made of stone, Skullrot's walls are impervious to spells such as *stone shape* and *transmute rock to mud.*

Howling: The fiendish howling and screaming that fills the asylum drowns out all but the loudest noises. Listen checks made in Skullrot suffer a –10 penalty.

Illumination: The creatures entrusted to oversee the asylum have darkvision, and do not require light to see. Orthrys's red sky bleeds through the porous walls of the asylum, giving the walls a dull red

Campaign Seed: Fate of the Cagewrights

If any of the Cagewrights fled to Carceri during "Strike on Shatterhorn," they are invariably drawn to the asylum and to Adimarchus. The warden of Skullrot, however, quickly overcomes them, infects them with his touch of insanity, and locks them away for all time (see area 9 for details)—an ironic fate, to be sure. Dark Myrakul takes exception to anyone who comes to Skullrot seeking to harm or free one of his "guests," and he doesn't give up his prisoners for any price. The PCs may encounter them as gibbering shells or even as caged zombies, but they have nothing to fear from these Cagewrights now.

The one exception is Embril Aloustinai. If she escaped to Carceri with a character's soul in her *magic jar* gem, she uses *commune* to contact Nerull and alerts him she has a soul to trade for Adimarchus's release. Unfortunately for Embril, Nerull doesn't intend to fully honor this bargain. He sends one of his favored minions to collect on the soul and tells Embril that only the Smoking Eye can free Adimarchus. If any of the PCs has this template, Embril becomes obsessed with capturing that PC and bringing him to Adimarchus's prison. She returns to the Material Plane soon after and tracks that PC down, attempting to kidnap him as well.

glow that isn't quite sufficient to actually illuminate the interior.

Doors: Skullrot's doors are made of magically treated iron.

Iron Door: 2 in. thick; Hardness 20; hp 120; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 40.

Dangling Cages: Eighty iron cages hang from bone spurs on the outside of Skullrot. Seventy-two of the cages contain animated skeletons and zombies—the remains of adventurers who unwisely meddled in Dark Myrakul's affairs. The skeletons vigorously shake their cages while the zombies groan mournfully.

Dangling Cage: 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 40.

Skeletons (42): hp 6 each; *Monster Manual* 226.

Zombies (30): hp 16 each; *Monster Manual* 266.

Special Spell Effects: Skullrot is protected by the equivalent of an *unhallow* spell (caster level 30th). Creatures in the asylum (but not those in the dangling cages outside the asylum) gain the benefits of *magic circle against good*. All turning checks made to turn undead take a –4 penalty, and turning checks to rebuke undead gain a +4 profane bonus (spell resistance does not apply to this effect). The *unhallow* spell also carries an *invisibility purge* spell that affects the whole interior.

In addition, Skullrot is protected by the equivalent of a *dimensional lock* spell. This effect bars *astral projection, blink, dimension door, ethereal jaunt, etherealness, gate, plane shift, shadow walk, teleport, greater teleport, teleportation circle*, and similar spell-like effects and psionic abilities. It does not block *banishment, dismissal*, or similar spells, nor does it prevent summoned creatures from appearing or disappearing.

1. Balcony

This balcony, made entirely of skulls, rises 30 feet above the swamp. Tall iron doors bar entry into the structure. The iron doors are *arcane locked* (see Asylum Features for details).

2. Demodand Guards (EL 18)

Mournful howls resonate within this dark chamber. The walls of leering skulls bring no comfort, and the floor is covered in sticky tar.

The floor is coated in adhesive slime. Characters moving across the floor must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 17) or be held fast; prying oneself free requires a DC 17 Strength check. Characters who make a successful save can move at half speed through the slime. The demodands that guard the room (see Creatures, below) can move through the adhesive slime with impunity. A pair of *arcane locked* iron doors open out onto a balcony (area **1**), and a staircase of skulls rises up out of the slime and leads to area **3**.

Creatures: Ten farastus guard the room. They fight to the death and take no prisoners.

Farastu Demodands (10): hp 71 each; see page 46.

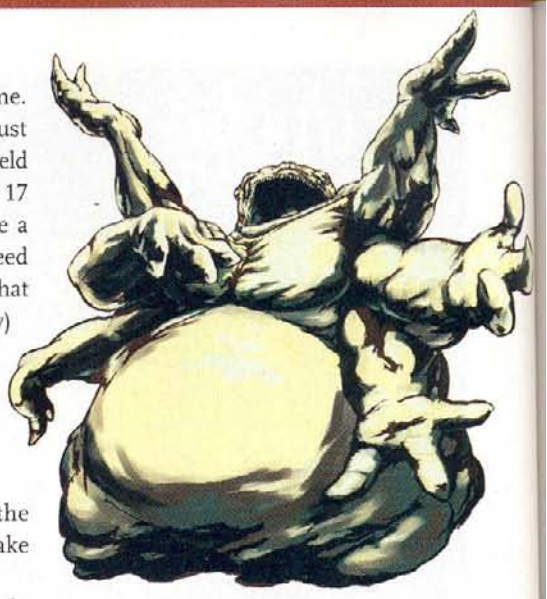
Development: The guardian in area **3** uses *clairvoyance/clairaudience* to observe the events in this room if combat breaks out. He then tries to summon an additional 1d4 farastus (60% chance of success) before moving to the top of the staircase and filling area **2** with an *acid fog*. He then targets visible foes with *Melf's acid arrow* and *rays of enfeeblement*.

3. Hexavog (EL 19)

The fiendish howls are loudest here, in the asylum's heart. This room sits at the base of a 20-foot-diameter shaft that soars up into darkness. Balconies with iron railings line the walls at higher levels.

Dark Myrakul has tasked a deformed kelubar demodand to serve as a captain of the guard for Skullrot. This creature is Hexavog, and he's spent too many years in Skullrot and has been driven mad himself. Hexavog spends countless days singing aloud—a wretched attempt to quell the screams of the myriad fiends trapped in Skullrot. Upon sighting intruders, he sings (in Abyssal) "What madness is this? What madness, indeed! Endless torment, dark despair, caged in bone, can't be freed. All the tales end the same: See you screaming, twisting, dreaming, dreaming you never came."

Creatures: Hexavog moves well despite his massive, undulating bulk. His filthy stench fills the room; all non-demodands within the area must make a Fortitude save against the stench or suffer its ill effects. Hexavog is a monstrously bloated and



filthy fiend with batlike wings and six rubbery arms, his black skin coated in wretched green slime.

Hexavog, Six-armed Advanced Kelubar Demodand: CR 19; Large outsider (evil, extraplanar); HD 22d8+132; hp 234; Init +5; Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average); AC 29, touch 10, flat-footed 28; Base Atk +22; Grp +35; Atk +30 melee (1d8+9 plus 1d6 acid, claw); Full Atk +30 melee (1d8+9 plus 1d6 acid, 6 claws) and +28 melee (1d8+4 plus 1d6 acid, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA acidic slime, sneak attack +8d6, spell-like abilities, stench, *summon demodand*; SQ damage reduction 15/good, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, immune to acid, cold, fire, and poison, outsider traits, spell resistance 25, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +21, Ref +14, Will +15; Str 28, Dex 12, Con 22, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 18.

Skills: Bluff +29, Concentration +31, Diplomacy +31, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Gather Information +29, Intimidate +31, Knowledge (the planes) +27, Listen +27, Perform (sing) +16, Sense Motive +27, Spot +27, Survival +2 (+4 on other planes).

Feats: Ability Focus (stench), Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Multiattack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability *(fear)*, Quicken Spell-Like Ability *(Melf's acid arrow)*.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Demodand, Infernal, Terran.

Acidic Slime (Ex): Each of Hexavog's claw and bite attacks deals +1d6 points of acid damage. On a successful critical hit, this burst of acid deals +1d10 points of acid damage instead.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect magic, clairvoyance/clairaudience, fear* (DC 18), *invisibility, Melf's acid arrow* (+22 ranged touch), *spider climb, tongues*; 3/day—*fog cloud, ray of enfeeblement* (+22 ranged touch); 2/day—*acid fog, dispel magic*. Caster level 22nd; the save DCs are Charisma-based.

Stench (Ex): All creatures (except demodands) within 30 feet of Hexavog must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 29) or be nauseated as long as the creature remains in the area and for 10 rounds thereafter. A successful save means that the creature is immune to Hexavog's stench for 1 day. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes the Ability Focus (stench) feat.

***Summon Demodand* (Sp):** Once per day, Hexavog can attempt to summon 1d2 kelubars (40% chance of success) or 1d4 farastus (60% chance of success).

Tactics: Hexavog spends most of his time observing various areas of the asylum using *clairvoyance/clairaudience*. He tries to summon 1d4 farastus (60% chance of success) and fills the room with an *acid fog* before wading into battle. If he has support from the farastus, Hexavog tries to flank foes to make sneak attacks. If reduced to half its hit points, he flies up the shaft to area **10**, singing as he goes. In addition to his regular attacks, Hexavog makes liberal use of quickened *Melf's acid arrows* or quickened *fears* every round; he can quicken each up to three times a day.

Remember, Hexavog cannot turn invisible because of the *invisibility purge* effect within Skullrot (see Asylum Features). If he cannot escape the characters, Hexavog tries to bargain for his life. An expert liar, he tells the heroes whatever he thinks they want to hear. He also likes to gloat when he's clearly winning and may be goaded into revealing some useful information.

Development: Hexavog knows that Adimarchus is trapped in area **10**. However, the kelubar believes that Adimarchus has learned how to "slip" into the minds of other living creatures, making them do things. Hexavog himself has been "touched" by Adimarchus and occasionally feels a driving need to free the demon prince from captivity. However, to date Hexavog has resisted the urge to cross Dark Myrakul. Only his great skill at bluffing has kept Dark Myrakul from learning of this weakness. Hexavog knows that it's only a matter of time before Adimarchus escapes; he just hopes it's not his fault when it happens.

The farastus in area **2** come to Hexavog's aid if combat erupts here. In addition, Slouva (see area **8**) likely hears any battle that breaks out here despite the intervening distance and the –10 penalty from the howling fiends, thanks to her high Listen check and the low DC (–10) to hear a battle. She arrives 2d4+1 rounds after combat begins to aid Hexavog. If particularly hard pressed, Slouva retreats to her lair (area **6**) to send her minion there after the PCs.

4. Golem Lab (EL 17)

This hideous laboratory holds six glass vats, each one four feet tall, four feet wide, and filled with red fluid. The vats hold naked human corpses, their faces peeled off. Human brains and vital organs float in glass canisters on bone shelves above the vats. A table consisting of patchwork flesh canvas stretched over a bone frame dominates the middle of the room. Bone flanges fitted with hooks protrude from the table, and stretched between the hooks are six peeled-off human faces.

Dark Myrakul uses this room to make his hideous flesh golems, two of which stand ready to destroy unwanted interlopers. Any corpse immersed in one of the vats is permanently preserved as though warded by a *gentle repose* spell; this magic property is as much an effect of Skullrot itself as of the vats, which lose this property if brought outside of the asylum. If the PCs lost one of their own to Embril's *magic jar* gambit in "Strike on Shatterhorn," that PC's preserved dead body can be found here, awaiting use in golem creation. Particularly sinister DMs may wish to have the character's body already used to help create the two golems located here.

Creatures: Dark Myrakul's flesh golems are lumbering, apelike brutes with sunken black eyes and skin made of stitched human faces. These golems are much larger and more dangerous than a standard flesh golem.

Advanced Flesh Golems (2): CR 15; Huge construct; HD 27d10+40; hp 188 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 10, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +20; Grp +41; Atk +31 melee (4d6+13, slam); Full Atk +31 melee (4d6+13, 2 slams); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft.; SA berserk; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 5/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +8; Str 37, Dex 14, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1.

Treasure: Tucked under the table are three jars of special unguents (400 gp each), three spools of stitching twine (100 gp each), and an incantation to Graz'zt written in blood on a scroll. The incantation allows a character to substitute a *miracle* spell for the *limited wish* spell needed to craft a flesh golem, and is worth 1,000 gp to a collector or worshiper of Graz'zt.

5. Dark Myrakul's Study (EL 19)

The middle of this room holds three tables made of hardened black resin. They vaguely resemble flat-topped mushrooms. Two are covered with fat tomes, flasks, candles, and scrolls. The third holds a metal apparatus shaped like a pair of claws, one holding an iron flask inlaid with silver runes, and the other suspended above the flask, its talons hooked into the flask's brass stopper. A fat iron chest shaped like a crouching, demonic toad rests in one corner.

This room serves as Dark Myrakul's workshop and study. Characters searching the tables find the Treasure. However, any living creature that enters the room causes the clawlike apparatus to pull the stopper on the *iron flask*, releasing the Creature trapped within. Only Dark Myrakul knows the correct command word to control the creature ("cthirol").

The iron toad-shaped chest contains more of this room's Treasure.

Creature: Unplugging the *iron flask* releases an advanced devourer. It fights until destroyed and relentlessly pursues its quarry.

Advanced Devourer: CR 19; Huge undead (extraplanar); HD 36d12; hp 234; Init +4; Spd 30 ft; AC 25, touch 7, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +18; Grp +39; Atk +29 melee (2d6+13, claw); Full Atk +29 melee (2d6+13, 2 claws); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft.; SA energy drain (DC 36), spell-like

abilities, trap essence (DC 36); SQ darkvision 60 ft., spell deflection, spell resistance 21, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +13, Ref +12, Will +23; Str 36, Dex 8, Con —, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 23.

Skills: Climb +52, Concentration +39, Diplomacy +8, Jump +52, Listen +42, Move Silently +38, Sense Motive +42, Spot +42.

Feats: Ability Focus (energy drain), Ability Focus (trap essence), Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Great Fortitude, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Improved Trip, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*confusion*), Weapon Focus (claw).

Tactics: At the start of the encounter, the devourer has 10 levels of trapped essence. In addition to attacking with its claws, the advanced devourer can use its quickened *confusion* once per round, up to three times a day.

Treasure: The iron chest contains two blocks of *incense of meditation* wrapped in a black shroud, a *wand of false life* (6 charges), and any items taken from Cagewrights trapped in area **9**. Any items taken from a PC's body stolen by Embril can be found here as well. Characters searching the tables find a scroll of *antilife shell*, a scroll of *planar ally* (calls a bebilith named Iyacchai), a scroll of *discern location*, a *potion of remove curse*, three *potions of inflict serious wounds*, an unholy font made out of a shator's skull (100 gp; focus for *scrying* and *greater scrying* spells), a collection of four malefic tomes titled The Black Codices of Graz'zt (a must-read for clerics of Graz'zt, containing unholy prayers and grim treatises on death and undeath; the set is worth 8,000 gp to an interested buyer), a tiny reliquary containing a fragment of bone etched with profane runes (500 gp; focus for the *unholy aura* spell), a type II *bag of holding* containing 20,000 gp (used to cover the costs of flesh golem creation), and a tiny black box traced with silver runes and skull designs (250 gp) containing three black sapphires (worth 15,000 gp, 17,000 gp, and 20,000 gp respectively; foci for *soul bind* spells).

The *iron flask* on the desk can be salvaged with ease, although chances are it's empty by the time the PCs get to it.

6. Slouva's Bedchamber (EL 15)

A ten-foot-long bed made of lashed bones dominates this room. The blankets covering the bed are of stitched flesh and fur. The room is otherwise bare.

This room belongs to Slouva, Dark Myrakul's assistant. Slouva is a fiendish annis barbarian that spends the majority of her time tormenting the deranged prisoners of Skullrot, feeding their hopelessness. She can usually be found in area **8** on one of the upper floors of the asylum, but may have retreated to this room after coming down to area **3** to aid Hexavog in a fight.

Creature: Although she keeps no valuables in this chamber, Slouva does keep a dangerous minion here, a particularly servile yet dangerous chasme demon named Lriznisith. Slouva finds the chasme's drone to be quite soothing, and often uses it to drown out the howling of the asylum's prisoners when she sleeps.

Like most chasme, Lriznisith is a disgusting, fly-like demon. An expert in punishment and torture, Slouva sometimes enlists his aid when a prisoner has done something particularly naughty and needs to be reprimanded. Lriznisith has tufts of hair sprouting at random from his tough, insectoid flesh. He has large buzzing wings and six limbs, two of which resemble long, thin human arms. His head is vaguely humanlike, although exaggerated and ugly, with a hard, hooked horn where a human's nose would be.

Lriznisith, Advanced Chasme Demon: CR 15; Large outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, evil, tanar'ri); HD 18d8+108; hp 199; Init +6; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 29, touch 15, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +18; Grp +27; Atk +22 melee (2d6+5/19–20, claw); Full Atk +22 melee (2d6+5/19–20, 2 claws) and +20 melee (1d6+2, bite) and +20 melee (1d6+2, gore); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA drone, fear aura, spell-like abilities, wounding; SQ damage reduction 10/good, immune to electricity, immune to poison, resistance to acid 10, resistance to cold 10, resistance to fire 10, spell resistance 23, *summon tanar'ri*, telepathy 100 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +17, Ref +17, Will +12; Str 20, Dex 22, Con 22, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 18; *Book of Vile Darkness* 172.

Skills: Concentration +27, Hide +23, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Listen +22, Move Silently +27, Search +23, Spot +22, Survival +22 (+24 on other planes).

Feats: Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Natural Attack (claw), Mobility, Multiattack, Power Attack.

Languages: Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic.

Drone (Su): As a full-round action, Lriznisith can beat his wings to create a droning buzz in a 60-foot spread. Each creature in the area must make a DC 23 Will save or fall asleep for 2d10 rounds. Although the ability otherwise functions like the *sleep* spell, there is no Hit Dice limit for this effect. Demons and creatures that are immune to *sleep* effects are immune to a chasme's drone. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Fear Aura (Su): As a free action, Lriznisith can create an aura of fear in a 5-

foot radius. All creatures in this area must make a DC 23 Will save or become panicked. If the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by Lriznisith's fear aura for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Wounding (Ex): A wound resulting from any of Lriznisith's attacks continues to bleed for an additional 1 point of damage per round thereafter. Multiple wounds result in cumulative damage. The bleeding can be stopped by a successful DC 10 Heal check or the application of a magical healing effect.

***Summon Tanar'ri* (Sp)**: Once per day, Lriznisith can attempt to summon 1d4 rutterkins or 1 chasme with a 40% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 3rd-level spell.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): At will—*contagion* (DC 18), *darkness, desecrate, detect good, dispel magic, fly, insect plague, ray of enfeeblement* (+24 ranged touch), *protection from good, see invisibility, telekinesis* (DC 19), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of gear only), *wave of grief* (DC 16); 1/day—*circle of nausea* (DC 17), *unholy aura* (DC 22). Caster level 10th.

Note: Chasmes are detailed in the *Book of Vile Darkness*. If you don't have access to this book, the stats above should be enough to run this encounter. Even though a few of the demon's spell-like abilities (*circle of nausea* and *wave of grief*) and the details on one of the demons it can summon (rutterkin) are also detailed in that book, the chasme's other abilities should still be enough to menace the PCs.

Tactics: Lriznisith doesn't allow anyone but Slouva or Dark Myrakul into this room; all others are intruders upon his mistress' domain and are attacked immediately. If brought below 40 hit points and Slouva isn't here as well, he teleports to area **8** on the 4th floor to report his failure to his mistress and recruit her aid in launching a counter-attack against the PCs.

7. Howling Fiends (EL Varies)

These wings of the asylum contain six cells each (84 cells total, spread across four stories). An *arcane locked* iron door bars each cell. The cell itself contains a screaming Creature bound in magically treated spiked chains. Creatures with bite attacks also wear iron masks with a narrow mouth slot for feedings. The chains and masks prevent the creatures from using any of their natural attacks. The chains also bind the creatures to the floor, walls, and ceiling. Moreover, any creature that struggles against the chains takes 4d4+10 points of damage per round from the spikes.

Spiked Chains: 2 in. thick; Hardness 20; hp 120; Break DC 30; Escape Artist 50; Open Lock DC 40.

Iron Mask: 1 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 30; Break DC 24; Escape Artist 50; Open Lock DC 40.

Creatures: Each cell contains a single insane creature. Some of the creatures appear calm, while others are raving mad. The chains prevent them from leaving the cell's confines or attacking with their natural weapons. A metal mask prevents them from making bite attacks. To determine the type of creature in a particular cell, roll randomly on the following table:

The three types of yugoloths are fiendish neutral evil outsiders detailed in *Monster Manual III*. If you don't have this book, simply re-roll on the table.

The creatures imprisoned here are horridly insane and attack anyone who frees

Howling Prisoners of Skullrot

d%	Creature
01–10	Fallen Angel: astral deva (01–60), planetar (61–100)
11–20	Fallen Archon: hound archon hero (01–50), trumpet archon (51–100)
21–30	Berserk advanced flesh golem (see area **4** for statistics)
31–40	Demodand: farastu (01–50), kelubar (51–85), or shator (86–100)
41–50	Demon: balor (01–10), hezrou (11–40), succubus (41–70), vrock (71–100)
51–60	Devil: hamatula (01–30), erinyes (31–60), cornugon (61–90), pit fiend (91–100)
61–70	Fallen Guardinal: avoral (01–50), leonal (51–100)
71-90	Slaad: red (01–25), blue (26–50), green (51–75), death (76–100)
91–100	Yugoloth: mezzoloth (01–50), nycaloth (51–85), ultraloth (86–90)

them, despite their actual alignment. A *greater restoration*, *miracle*, or *wish* is required to restore an insane creature's mind; each creature freed in this manner reacts differently, depending on its alignment and the PCs' attitude. Remember that even if cured of their insanities, these outsiders are still criminals who committed some extremely heinous acts in order to end up here, and releasing them might have unforeseen repercussions beyond the scope of this adventure.

Of course, Dark Myrakul knows if any of his prisoners are freed, and quickly comes to investigate.

8. Balconies (EL 19)

Each of these balconies has a four-foot-high spiked iron railing strung with chains. Some of the spikes have skulls impaled on them.

Three Creatures patrol the third floor of the asylum, feeding prisoners and tightening chains. Once they've inspected all of the residents on that level, they move on to the other floors, or even up to area **9** on floors 5–8.

Creatures: Dark Myrakul's assistant, Slouva, is a fiendish annis with black scraggly hair and pebbly, midnight blue skin. She carries a black jug filled with edible brown sludge that she serves to those prisoners who need to eat and drink—the outsiders imprisoned here don't, but the prisoners in area **9** certainly do. She paces the howling halls with her two flesh golem bodyguards, chanting merrily. Dark Myrakul's flesh golems are lumbering, apelike brutes with sunken black eyes and skin made of stitched humanoid faces.

Slouva, Fiendish Annis Barbarian 11: CR 19; Large monstrous humanoid; HD 7d8+21 plus 11d12+33; hp 173; Init +1; Spd 50 ft.; AC 30, touch 10, flat-footed 29; Base Atk +18; Grp +30; Atk +27 melee (1d8+10, claw); Full Atk +27 melee (1d8+10, 2 claws) and +25 melee (1d6+6, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA greater rage 3/day, improved grab, rake +27 melee (1d6+10), rend 2d6+14, smite good 1/day (+18 damage), spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction 2/—, damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., fast movement, improved uncanny dodge, resistance to cold 10 and fire 10, spell resistance 23, trap sense +3; AL CE; SV Fort +14, Ref +11, Will +9; Str 26, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +19, Bluff +8, Diplomacy +2, Disguise +0 (+2 acting), Hide +5, Intimidate +13, Jump +19, Listen +21, Spot +21.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Great Fortitude, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack.

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Giant.

Greater Rage (Ex): Slouva can fly into a rage three times per day. While raging, her statistics are as follows: hp 227; AC 28, touch 8, flat-footed 27; Grp +33; Atk +30 melee (1d8+13, claw); Full Atk +30 melee (1d8+13, 2 claws) and +28 melee (1d6+7, bite); SA rake +30 melee (1d6+13), rend 2d6+18; SV Fort +17, Will +11; Str 32, Con 22.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—disguise self, fog cloud. Caster level 8th.

Possessions: +4 mithril breastplate, amulet of mighty fists +2, chime of opening (43 charges), *black jug* (command word "urvalak"), cold iron ladle (can be wielded as a cold iron club).

Wondrous Item: Black Jug

Three times per day, when the proper command word is spoken, this hideous iron jug fills with enough nutritious but foul-tasting brown gruel to feed 30 Medium or smaller creatures or 15 Large creatures. The jug weighs 40 pounds empty and 75 pounds full.

Moderate conjuration; CL 10th; Craft Wondrous Item, *create food and water*; Price: 32,400 gp.

Advanced Flesh Golems (2): hp 188 each; see area **4**.

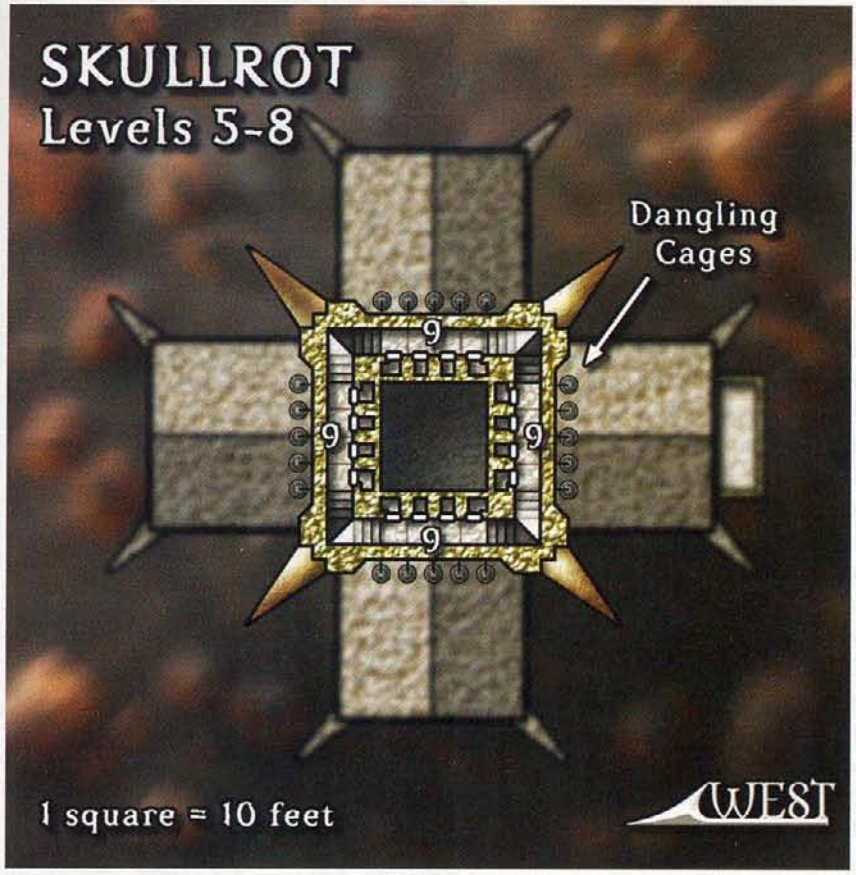
Tactics: The sly annis hopes to run the asylum one day, and being a treacherous creature, she plans to turn against Dark Myrakul if the opportunity presents itself. As long as Dark Myrakul is in charge, however, she obeys his commands and defends the asylum as best she can.

If confronted, she sends her golems into battle. If they are destroyed, she flies into a rage and lunges forth with claws and teeth bared. If truly hard-pressed, Slouva flees and uses her *chime of opening* to unlock one of the denizens of area 7 (preferably an insane pit fiend). Roll on the *confusion* spell table (*Player's Handbook*, page 212) to determine how the pit fiend behaves once released. Slouva hopes the pit fiend distracts her enemies long enough for her to reach area **10** and alert Dark Myrakul.

9. Cells (EL Varies)

The inner walls of these corridors are lined with *arcane locked* iron doors. The doors lead to cramped cells, each holding a prisoner stricken with insanity.

Creatures: Unlike the celestials and fiends imprisoned in area 7, the residents of these cells are not bound with chains. Instead, they wear tight-fitting straightjackets made of stitched demon hide. They carry no gear and have no spells prepared. Roll on the following table to determine what type of NPC is confined to each cell, and use the NPC statistics in Chapter 4 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* as necessary for their statistics.



A NEW POWER IN FANTASY HAS ARRIVED!
THE GODS HAVE DEVISED A TRAP FOR ALL MANKIND. THEY SABOTAGED THEIR OWN HOLY QUEST. ONLY ONE GROUP CAN OPPOSE THEM:
THE UNLIVING!
NO GODS OF CONSCIENCE
UNDEAD LEGEND BOOK ONE
JASON J. BILICIC
JASON J BILICIC
"The most original author in years."
"Stunning! A unique Masterpiece!"
-PBC Book Review-
AVAILABLE EVERYWHERE
SAVE $ ORDER AT
UNLIFE-LEGEND.COM

If any of the Cagewrights escaped from Shatterhorn and found their way here, they can be found in one of these cells, stripped of their gear and their sanity. (Their possessions can be found in area 5.)

Forlorn Wards of Skullrot

d%	NPC
01–10	Barbarian, level 1d10+10
11–20	Bard, level 2d6+8
21–30	Cleric, level 2d6+8
31–40	Fighter, level 1d10+10
41–50	Monk, level 1d10+10
51–60	Fallen paladin, level 1d10+10
61–70	Ranger, level 1d10+10
71–80	Rogue, level 1d10+10
81–90	Sorcerer, level 2d6+8
91–100	Wizard, level 2d6+8

Repercussions for freeing any of these insane criminals should be similar to those for freeing the outsiders in area 7.

10. Adimarchus's Prison (EL 24)

The staircases lead up to this twenty-foot-high chamber. The floor gives way to a forty-foot-wide shaft in the middle of the room. A large iron cage is suspended over the shaft, its base level with the floor of the room. The cage itself is shaped like a coffin made of metallic bones, the bars studded with spikes and cruel hooks. No door seems to be apparent on the cage, as if it were built to never be opened. Slumped on the floor of the cage is an angelic figure with purple skin, golden tattoolike patterns crisscrossing its body, and wings of metallic gold feathers. It covers its face with its hands and appears to be sobbing.

The central shaft drops 160 feet to the floor of area 3. A thick iron chain connects the hemispherical cage to a heavy iron winch that's bolted to the floor. Using the winch to raise or lower the cage requires a DC 26 Strength check; the cage ascends or descends at a rate of 20 feet (one floor) per round.

The angelic creature trapped inside the cage is none other than the demon prince of madness himself—Adimarchus. While Dark Myrakul torments him with words, Adimarchus tries desperately to tap into the minds of creatures capable of rescuing him. Dark Myrakul knows what the demon prince hopes to accomplish, but he doesn't believe for an instant that Adimarchus can succeed. The failure of the Cagewrights is all the proof the lichfiend needs of this fact.

Creatures: The undead half-fiend Dark Myrakul is the warden of Skullrot; he spends the majority of his time here tormenting Adimarchus, and is here when the PCs first arrive at Skullrot. He trusts his minions to handle intruders, but if those intruders make it all the way up here he realizes that the defense of Skullrot has fallen to him alone. He is attended at all times by one of his greatest creations, a demonflesh golem. This golem is similar in basic appearance to a flesh golem, yet its parts have been harvested from demons, resulting in a far more horrifying creation than a mere flesh golem.

Dark Myrakul himself appears as a humanoid skeleton with clawed hands, horns, and fangs. He is clad in jet-black chainmail, and bony wings spring from his back. (Although Dark Myrakul's batlike wings are missing their leathery flaps, he can still fly.) Once a half-demodand, Dark Myrakul underwent a painful and torturous process similar to that some humanoids undertake to become a lich; with the aid of his demonic patron Graz'zt, Dark Myrakul became a vile undead menace known as a lichfiend. Today, Dark Myrakul is one of Graz'zt's most dangerous servants. Although a cleric, he does not gain his spells directly from Graz'zt. Rather, Graz'zt acts as Dark Myrakul's patron; the lichfiend's spells are granted by his faith in abstract forces of chaos and evil.

Dark Myrakul, Male Half-fiend/Half-human Lichfiend Cleric 18 (Graz'zt): CR 23; Medium undead; HD 18d12; hp 141; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (average); AC 30, touch 12, flat-footed 28; Base Atk +13; Grp +17; Atk +21 melee (2d4+10/19–20/×4, +4 *keen vorpal adamantine scythe*) or +17 melee (1d4+4, claw) or +17 melee touch (1d8+5* plus insanity, touch); Full Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (2d4+10/19–20/×4, *+4 keen vorpal adamantine scythe*) and +12 melee (1d6+2, bite) or +17 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws) and +12 melee (1d6+2, bite) or +17 melee touch (1d8+5* plus insanity, touch); SA fear aura, insanity, rebuke undead 7/day (1d20+6; affects 2d6+22 HD), smite good 1/day (+18 damage), spell-like abilities, spells; SQ damage reduction 15/

Dark Myrakul

Lichfiend

"Lichfiend" is a monster template that is nearly identical to the lich template detailed in the *Monster Manual*, save that whereas the lich is the result of a humanoid spellcaster seeking to prolong his life via undeath, the lichfiend is an outsider spellcaster who seeks only to gain personal power at the expense of his free will.

The lichfiend template is identical to the lich template, save for the following differences:

- The lichfiend template may be applied to any evil outsider that has the Evil Brand feat and is at least caster level 11 in a spellcasting class.
- A lichfiend's touch does not threaten permanent paralysis; rather, it threatens permanent *insanity*, as the spell of the same name.
- Lichfiends do not create phylacteries to house their life force. Rather, their life force is maintained by a powerful fiendish patron or evil deity. This patron can revoke the lichfiend's undead status (thereby destroying the lichfiend) as a free action at any time, so lichfiends are unquestioningly loyal to their patrons. A lichfiend that is killed crumbles to dust and its lifeforce returns to is patron, who may create a new body identical to the lichfiend's prior body if he wishes, or he may simply absorb the lichfiend's lifeforce, destroying it utterly. The only way to permanently slay a lichfiend is to use a *miracle* or *wish* within one round of the lichfiend's destruction to prevent its life force from returning to its patron, or to convince its patron to destroy the lifeforce rather than restore it to a body.

bludgeoning and magic, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to cold, electricity, mind-affecting attack, poison, and polymorph, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10, and sonic 10, spell resistance 28, turn resistance +4; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +16; Str 18, Dex 14, Con —, Int 18, Wis 20, Cha 18.

*A successful Will save (DC 23) reduces the damage by half. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Skills: Concentration +21, Diplomacy +25, Heal +26, Hide +6, Knowledge (religion) +25, Knowledge (the planes) +25, Listen +13, Move Silently +6, Search +12, Spellcraft +25, Spot +13.

Feats: Craft Construct, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Evil Brand*, Greater Spell Penetration, Hover, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (poison), Spell Penetration.

*This feat is detailed on page 49 of the *Book of Vile Darkness*. It grants a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks made against evil creatures.

Fear Aura (Su): Creatures of less than 5 HD in a 60-foot radius that look at a lichfiend must succeed on a Will save (DC 23) or be affected as though by a *fear* spell (caster level 18th). A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected again by the lichfiend's fear aura for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Insanity (Sp): Dark Myrakul does not have a paralyzing touch. Instead, any living creature the lich hits with its touch attack must succeed on a Will save (DC 23) or be affected as if by an *insanity* spell (caster level 18th). *Remove curse* does not remove insanity, but a *greater restoration*, *heal*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish* spell can restore the character. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*darkness*, quickened *poison* (Fort DC 17), *unholy aura* (Fort DC 22); 1/day—*blasphemy* (Will DC 21), *contagion* (Fort DC 17), *desecrate*, *destruction* (Fort DC 21), *horrid wilting* (Fort DC 22), *summon monster IX* (farastu demodand), *unhallow*, *unholy blight* (Will DC 18). Caster level 18th; the save DCs are Charisma-based.

Spells Prepared (Caster level 18; save DC 15 + spell level): 0—*create water* (3), *cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *read magic*; 1st—*bane* (DC 16), *cause fear*[D] (DC 16), *deathwatch*, *divine favor* (2), *doom* (2, DC 16), *entropic shield*; 2nd—*align weapon*, *eagle's splendor*, *death knell*[D] (DC 17), *hold person* (DC 17), *owl's wisdom*, *silence* (2, DC 17); 3rd—*animate dead*[D], *bestow curse* (2, DC 18), *contagion* (2, DC 18), *create food and water*, *deeper darkness*; 4th—*discern lies* (DC 19), *divine power*, *freedom of movement*, *greater magic weapon* (already cast), *sending*, *spell immunity*, *unholy blight*[D] (DC 19); 5th—*flame strike* (2, DC 20), *slay living*[D] (DC 20), *spell resistance* (2), *true seeing*; 6th—*antilife shell*, *banishment*, *create undead*[D], *greater dispel magic* (2); 7th—*destruction*[D] (2, DC 22), *summon monster VII* (2); 8th—*create greater undead*[D], *fire storm* (DC 23), *greater spell immunity*, *summon monster VIII*; 9th—*energy drain* (+15 ranged touch, DC 24), *implosion* (DC 24), *wail of the banshee*[D] (DC 24).

D: Domain spell. *Domains*: Death (death touch 1/day; +17 melee touch), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

Possessions: *+4 chainmail of sonic resistance*, *+1 keen vorpal adamantine scythe* (with *greater magic weapon* cast on it), *amulet of natural armor +3*, silver unholy symbol of Graz'zt (500 gp), pouch containing 6 black onyx gems (500 gp each; material components for *animate dead*, *create undead*, and *create greater undead* spells), iron keys to cell doors (in areas **7** and **9**).

Demonflesh Golem: CR 18; Huge construct (extraplanar); HD 24d10+40; hp 229; Init +3; Spd 50 ft., fly 100 ft. (average); AC 33, touch 7, flat-footed 33; Base Atk +18, Grp +36; Atk +27 melee (2d6+10, slam) and +29 melee (2d6+12/19–20, claw); Full Atk +27 melee (2d6+10, slam) and +29 melee (2d6+12/19–20, claw) or +27 melee (1d6+10 plus daze, tail lash); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft. (25 ft. with tail); SA claw graft, fear gaze, spell-like abilities, whip tail graft; SQ construct traits, damage reduction 15/adamantine and good, immune to electricity, immunity to magic, fast leg graft, resistance to acid 20, resistance to cold 20, resistance to fire 20, see invisibility; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +9; Str 31, Dex 8, Con —, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 13; *Fiend Folio* 86.

Skills: Climb +29, Jump +28.

Feats: Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (claw), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claw), Weapon Focus (slam), Weapon Focus (tail lash).

Claw Graft (Ex): A demonflesh golem's left arm can attack independently of its control; this allows the golem to effectively

attack with this claw as a free action. The clawed arm has a Strength score of 35, attacks at the golem's full base attack bonus (plus its higher Strength bonus), and gains its full Strength bonus on damage rolls.

Fear Gaze (Su): Range 30 ft., DC 19 Will save or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): 3/day—*darkness*, *poison* (DC 15), *unholy aura* (DC 19); 1/day—*destruction* (DC 18), *horrid wilting* (DC 19), *unholy blight* (DC 15). Caster level 20th.

Whip Tail Graft (Ex): As a full-round action, a demonflesh golem can direct its tail to attack one creature within 25 feet. Wounds from the tail burn fiercely, causing the creature struck to be dazed for 1 round unless it makes a DC 11 Fortitude save.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A demonflesh golem is immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects, except as follows. A death effect slows it for 1d6 rounds. A spell with the chaotic or evil descriptor breaks any slow effect on the golem and cures 1 point of damage for each 3 points of damage it would otherwise deal. It is fully affected by spells with the law or good descriptor, unless its construct traits make it immune to the spell's effects.

Tactics: Before confronting interlopers, Dark Myrakul casts *greater spell immunity* (immune to *disintegrate*, *heal*, *magic missile*, and *searing light*; lasts 180 minutes), *spell resistance* (lasts 18 minutes), *shield of faith* (lasts 18 minutes), *eagle's splendor* (lasts 18 minutes), *owl's wisdom* (lasts 18 minutes), *divine power* (lasts 18 rounds), and *divine favor* (lasts 1 minute). With these spells in place, Dark Myrakul has the following modified statistics: hp 159; AC 35, touch 17, flat-footed 33; Base Atk +18; Grp +25; Atk +35 melee (2d4+20/19–20/×4, *+4 keen vorpal adamantine scythe*) or +31 melee (1d4+7, claw) or +31 melee touch (1d8+5* plus insanity, touch); Full Atk +35/+30/+25/+20 melee (2d4+20/19–20/×4, *+4 keen vorpal adamantine scythe*) and +12 melee (1d6+3, bite) or +31 melee (1d4+7, 2 claws) and +26 melee (1d6+3, bite) or +31 melee touch (1d8+5* plus insanity, touch); SR 30; SV Will +18; Str 24, Wis 24, Cha 22; Diplomacy +27, Heal +28, Listen +15, Spot +15; cleric spell save DC 17 + spell level; save DCs for spell-like abilities increase by +2.

The lichfiend likes to cast offensive spells such as *implosion*, *energy drain*, *destruction*, *summon monster*, *banishment*, and *greater dispel magic*. In melee, Dark Myrakul wields his *+1 keen vorpal adamantine scythe*. If he can't hit an enemy with his scythe, the lich uses his melee touch attack, combined with his quickened *poison* spell-like ability. His weapons are treated as magic for purposes of overcoming damage reduction.

Development: If destroyed, Dark Myrakul's body vanishes as his life force returns to Graz'zt's side. Fortunately for the PCs, Graz'zt has other pressing matters on his six-fingered hands at this time, and doesn't get around to investigating Dark Myrakul's death for several days. When he does notice the lichfiend has been slain and realizes that Skullrot's security has been compromised, his reaction is quick and brutal, as detailed in Concluding the Adventure.

Adimarchus Unleashed (EL 27)

The characters can choose to leave Adimarchus confined in his cage; however, he eventually escapes, either through his own actions or those of his deranged "followers" (the Cagewrights, for example). Additionally, his madness continues to leak out of the cage and into Occipitus, rebuilding and rebirthing Vhalantru (or other slain minions) at an increasing pace. The longer Adimarchus lives, the more of his madness escapes to torment the PCs in this manner. If the heroes destroy Dark Myrakul and either Slouva or Hexavog takes over as warden, Adimarchus might convince his new jailer to release him in exchange for the promise of even greater power. Unlike the lichfiend, the annis and the kelubar have no allegiance to Graz'zt and are easily swayed.

The cage that holds Adimarchus was created by Graz'zt, and should be treated as a major artifact. Its resemblance to the *soulcages* the PCs encountered earlier in the Adventure Path is no coincidence; the cage is Adimarchus's entire world, and in his insane inspirations gifted upon the Cagewrights, the design of the cage was a central theme. As long as the cage remains intact, Adimarchus cannot use any of his supernatural or spell-like abilities. (He can still shift between his two forms, however; see below for details.) Moreover, his effective Strength drops to 3, making it difficult for him to even stand. The cage itself is

Alternate Keys to Adimarchus's Cage

If your players haven't gone through "Test of the Smoking Eye," or if none of the current characters have the Sign of the Smoking Eye template, you'll need to adjust the conditions for freeing Adimarchus from his cage so that the PCs still have a chance to complete the adventure. The most important thing, no matter how you decide Adimarchus's cage can be destroyed, is that the PCs should be key in some way to the action.

One option is that only good outsiders can damage the cage. If Nidrama is with the party, she can destroy the cage if the PCs can keep her alive long enough to reach it. Otherwise, the PCs may need to use summoned monsters to do the work for them (unless, of course, one of the PCs happens to be a good outsider as well).

Another option is to require that the cage can only be destroyed if it is attacked simultaneously by a lawful good creature and a chaotic evil creature.

A particularly challenging option might be to require the PCs to find a creature with the Smoking Eye template (such as a reborn Vhalantru), somehow transport that creature to area **10** of Skullrot, and then convince or force that creature destroy the cage.

Note that the more obscure the conditions become, the less likely the PCs are to realize how to destroy the cage. They'll likely need to do some research in large libraries, consult with powerful outsiders, or use potent divination magic to learn the secret. Fortunately, Adimarchus isn't going anywhere, so they should have time to figure things out. Unfortunately, the longer they wait, the more likely it is that Graz'zt realizes his enemy's prison is unguarded (see "Concluding the Adventure").

impervious to magic and blocks any spell that targets its occupant—yet the cage is not as perpetual as its creator had hoped.

The reason for this is simple. When Graz'zt created the cage, he did so using several *wishes* to duplicate, in part, the effects of a powerful *binding* spell, infusing the cage with these magical energies. Unfortunately, even with these powerful spells he was unable to create a cage that would last forever; the only way to do so required an "escape clause" that would grant possibility of escape under a specific circumstance. By including such a flaw in the cage, he was able to ward the cage from other forces to such an extent that even other demon princes and other quasi-divine entities can do nothing to harm it.

As the escape clause, Graz'zt came up with a condition he felt certain would never come to pass; only the rightful ruler of Occipitus can damage the cage and release its prisoner. Graz'zt felt that any demonic ruler of Occipitus would be the last creature who would want to see Adimarchus released (thus releasing a powerful contender for rulership of Occipitus), but what he didn't realize was that anyone who passed the Test of the Smoking Eye could become the ruler of this Abyssal realm—including creatures that have no interest in ruling Occipitus!

Graz'zt kept this secret to himself, telling no one (least of all Adimarchus himself), yet anyone bearing the Sign of the Smoking eye who looks upon the cage immediately understands the nature of the flaw. To such a creature, the cage appears rusty, fragile, and feeble, something that can be bashed apart with a single weapon blow.

Releasing the catch on the winch causes the cage to plunge nine stories, dealing 16d6 points of damage to anything it strikes. If the creature that releases the catch has the Sign of the Smoking Eye template, the fall destroys the cage. Adimarchus is protected from the fall by the cage, but is freed as a result of such a fall.

As long as Adimarchus is imprisoned in the cage, he is immune to all damage and magic effects; he cannot be harmed at all. If the PCs want to end the threat his madness poses, they must release him and then slay him.

Creature: If freed, Adimarchus reacts strangely to a character with the Sign of the Smoking Eye template (see "Test of the Smoking Eye" in *Dungeon* #107). In his angelic form, he sees the character as a hated enemy who threatens to usurp his power, and he attacks that character to the exclusion of others. In his demonic form, he sees the character as a potential ally and heir apparent, and does not attack her (even if she attacks him), determining to win her allegiance in the war against Graz'zt. Only after persistent failed attempts to win the character's allegiance does Adimarchus turn against her.

A character with the Sign of the Smoking Eye template gains a +4 insight bonus on attack rolls made against Adimarchus and a +4 insight bonus on level checks to bypass the demon prince's spell resistance. In addition, all of the character's weapons are treated as cold iron and good-aligned for the purpose of overcoming Adimarchus's damage reduction.

Adimarchus's statistics appear in the Appendix.

Continuing the Campaign

With Adimarchus freed from Skullrot and likely slain by the PCs, "Asylum" and the Shackled City Adventure Path comes to a close. Yet this does not necessarily herald the end of your campaign; much is left to be done in the Cauldron region.

As for the PCs themselves, they're likely regarded as heroes by the refugees of Cauldron. Their actions in Skullrot go unknown by the majority of the populace, yet Cauldronites still view them as saviors, and rightfully so. The PCs have braved terrible fates in the defense of the region, and they deserve some rest. Give them some time to relax and enjoy the freedom they fought so hard for, and in time, if you are continuing the campaign, they'll get the itch to go on a new adventure soon enough. Some possible epic-level adventures are detailed below. With a little work, these adventure seeds can also serve as ideas for starting a brand new campaign in the area with new 1st-level characters.

- **Adimarchus Returns**: If released from Skullrot, Adimarchus returns to the Abyss to reclaim his realm. After reasserting his lordship over Occipitus, Adimarchus spends the next several months attracting deranged worshipers, rebuilding his demonic army, and plotting the downfall of his enemies. Whether or not that includes the heroes,

MOUNT ZOGON
LOOK AT THIS CAMPSITE, MUSHROOM! ADVENTURERS WERE HERE! CLOSE TO MY SLIME CAVE! A-A-AND THEY WANT TO STEAL YOU FROM ME!!
TONYM © 2004
STEAL ME? ARE YOU SURE?
YOU'RE VERY SMART AND ENTERTAINING! OF COURSE EVERYBODY WANTS YOU FOR THEIR OWN! BUT I WON'T ALLOW IT! YOU'RE MINE!
I'LL KILL YOU BEFORE I LET ANYBODY TAKE YOU!! THEN I'LL KILL MYSELF!
PERHAPS WE SHOULD FIND THE ADVENTURERS AND KILL THEM INSTEAD?
SEE?! -- "SMART AND ENTERTAINING"!

BY TONY MOSELEY

only time will tell! Note that even if the PCs kill Adimarchus on Carceri, his body reforms on Occipitus. If the PCs don't travel there to finish him off, he'll simply return again and again.

- **The Vanishing Plague:** In rebuilding Cauldron, some workers uncover the ruins of a small gnomish enclave in the rock below the town. In so doing, the workers unleash a particularly potent strain of the Vanishing, a magical disease detailed in "Life's Bazaar" (*DUNGEON* #97). Unlike that version, this one is contagious and resists magical curing. The PCs must find a cure for the disease before all of Cauldron's citizens succumb.
- **Lord of the Ebon Triad:** The Ebon Triad (first introduced in "Flood Season" in *DUNGEON* #98) is a secretive alliance of heretics from the churches of Erythnul, Vecna, and Hextor; they played a key role in the creation of the *soulcages* used by the Cagewrights, yet their presence in this campaign has always been subtle and minor. Now that the Cagewrights are gone, what sinister plans might the Ebon Triad's shadowed leader have in store for the region, and why are agents of the Ebon Triad so intrigued by the ruins of the Spire of Long Shadows to the northeast of Cauldron?
- **Menace from Below:** The PCs have likely already delved into the Underdark below the Cauldron region once (in "Zenith Trajectory," *DUNGEON* #102). Other entrances to the Underdark that once existed below Cauldron were recently collapsed by adventurers working for Vhalantru. In her explorations of the region, Shensen Tesseril has discovered that something has recently cleared these passages, something that did so from below. Why did Vhalantru want these entrances closed, and what new menace is creeping up toward town from below now that the recent volcanic activity has reopened them?
- **Nabthatoron's Revenge:** Since his defeat at the end of "The Demonskar Legacy" (*DUNGEON* #104), the body of the exiled glabrezu Nabthatoron has been recovered by his minions. Unable to restore true life to their master, these vile minions used forbidden necromantic lore stolen from spell weaver ruins to restore the demon to life as an undead menace. Now more powerful than ever, Nabthatoron seethes with a need for revenge against the heroes who laid him low.
- **An Abyssal Home Away from Home:** If any of the PCs gained the Sign of the Smoking Eye template in "Test of the Smoking Eye" (*DUNGEON* #107), they feel periodic urges to return to the Abyssal layer of Occipitus. What changes have been evolving there, now that Adimarchus is finally defeated, and what is the meaning behind the dreams of burning and suffering bearers of the Smoking Eye have begun to endure?

Adimarchus, (Demonic Form)

- **Necroclastic Doom:** After studying the lore contained on the Soul Pillars found during "Secrets of the Soul Pillars" (*DUNGEON* #109), the local wizard Meerthan Eliothlorn made a disturbing discovery. The soul pillars were damaged during the recent volcanic activity, and the necromantic energy within is building at an alarming rate. Before long, this energy could erupt in a manner similar to the volcano below, spewing negative energy instead of lava and wreaking unimaginable havoc. In order to defuse the soul pillars, the PCs must delve deeper than ever before into the ruined spell weaver holdings below Cauldron.
- **Haunted House:** Soon after purchasing House Vhalantru (explored by the PCs in "Lords of Oblivion" in *DUNGEON* #111), the Vanderborens moved into their new home. Less than a month later, they and their servants have vanished. Those who enter House Vhalantru and stay for a few minutes agree that something seems strange about the empty mansion now... and those who stay for longer vanish utterly. What fell menace has claimed the estate for its own, and what is the source of the strange lights that can sometimes be seen flashing inside the house at night? Has Vhalantru indeed returned from the grave to reclaim his domain?
- **Perils of Politics:** In "Foundation of Flame" (*DUNGEON* #113), the PCs helped lay the foundations for Cauldron's future, and may have chosen a new lord mayor. The new lord mayor could find himself in over his head when other nobles, guildmasters, and important NPCs start jockeying for favors, and may call upon the PCs to help sort out what is best for Cauldron's future.
- **You Killed My Master!:** In "Thirteen Cages" (*DUNGEON* #114) the PCs met and defeated many of the Cagewrights and their apprentices. Yet some of the apprentices were not present at the time of this adventure, and still live. With their masters and mistresses slain, these apprentices seek each other out and found a new cabal, one with a far more simple mission than the original Cagewrights. These new Cagewrights seek only the deaths of the PCs; revenge for the same fates they visited upon their lords and ladies.
- **Return of Ssythar Vassha:** Something the PCs did during "Strike on Shatterhorn" (*DUNGEON* #115) has had unforeseen consequences. Perhaps it was the destruction of the Egg of Merrshaulk, or maybe it was the defiling of the Temple of Fangs. Whatever the cause, Ssythar Vassha, the one-time lord of Shatterhorn and

prophet of the dark god of the yuan-ti, has returned to life and is gathering the scattered yuan-ti tribes of the jungle to his banner in preparation for a war to reclaim the lands surrounding Cauldron in Merrshaulk's unholy name!

- **Graz'zt's Rage:** Characters who free Adimarchus, either through their actions or inactions, earn Graz'zt's eternal enmity. Once the demon prince realizes that Dark Myrakul is slain, he absorbs the lichfiend's life force out of spite and then sends his son, Athux, to eliminate the heroes. A master of disguise with access to a vast planar spy network, Athux first sends assassins to dispose of the characters. Only if they fail does the son of Graz'zt deal with them personally. Graz'zt himself avoids direct confrontation with the PCs unless he can arrange an ambush; after all, the PCs have already defeated one demon prince!

Finally, know that some mysteries of the Shackled City Adventure Path must, for now, remain mysteries. Who is Celeste, and why did she trick the PCs into bringing Zenith Splintershield back to Cauldron to face his fate? And what monstrous catastrophe caused the spell weaver empire to end so spectacularly so long ago? The answers to these questions, and more, shall be unveiled in Age of Worms, the second *DUNGEON* Adventure Path, set to begin in 2005!

By day, Christopher Perkins is the mild-mannered Design Manager for RPGs and Miniatures at Wizards of the Coast. By night, he's a D&D-playing fiend who revels in fighting monsters and watching his players squirm. He writes adventures to stay sane.

Appendix

Adimarchus, Demon Prince of Madness

Adimarchus (Angelic Form)

Medium Outsider (Chaotic, Evil, Extraplanar, Tanar'ri)
Hit Dice: 30d8+312 (525 hp)
Initiative: +6
Speed: 50 ft., fly 100 ft. (good)
AC: 42 (+6 Dex, +7 armor, +9 insight, +10 natural), touch 25, flat-footed 36
Base Attack/Grapple: +30/+38
Attack: +41 melee (1d6+11 plus special, *+3 anarchic clawed gauntlet*)
Full Attack: +39/+34/+29/+24 melee (1d6+11 plus special, *+3 anarchic clawed gauntlet*) and +37/+32/+27 melee (1d3+5 nonlethal plus trip, *+1 brilliant energy whip*) or +39/+34/+29/+24 melee (1d6+11 plus special, *+3 anarchic clawed gauntlet*) and +37/+32/+27 melee (2d4+5/19–20/×4, razorwings)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft. (15 ft. with whip)
Special Attacks: Implosive strike, razorwings, spell-like abilities, *summon tanar'ri*
Special Qualities: Damage reduction 20/good and cold iron, darkvision 120 ft., golden tattoos, immune to acid, immune to cold, immune to electricity, immune to petrification, immune to poison, lie in state, madness, outsider traits, resistance to fire 10, resistance to sonic 10, shroud alignment, spell resistance 35, telepathy 300 ft.
Saves: Fort +30, Ref +23, Will +28
Abilities: Str 27, Dex 22, Con 36, Int 16, Wis 5, Cha 32
Skills: Bluff +46, Concentration +46, Diplomacy +48, Disguise +46 (+48 acting), Intimidate +48, Knowledge (religion) +36, Knowledge (the planes) +36, Listen +30, Sense Motive +30, Spot +30, Survival +30 (+32 on other planes)
Feats: Combat Expertise, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Trip, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Flyby Attack, Mobility, Spring Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Whirlwind Attack
Environment: Skullrot or Occipitus (507th layer of the Abyss)
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 23
Treasure: Quadruple standard
Alignment: Chaotic evil
Advancement: —

Adimarchus (Demonic Form)

Medium Outsider (Chaotic, Evil, Extraplanar, Tanar'ri)
Hit Dice: 30d8+312 (525 hp)
Initiative: +10
Speed: 50 ft.
AC: 45 (+6 Dex, +9 insight, +20 natural), touch 25, flat-footed 39
Base Attack/Grapple: +24/+36
Attack: +42 melee (2d6+23/17–20 plus special, *Ashen Blade*) and +34 melee (1d6+6 plus 1d4 negative levels, 4 tentacles)
Full Attack: +42/+37/+32/+27 melee (2d6+23/17–20 plus special, *Ashen Blade*) and +34 melee (1d6+6 plus 1d4 negative levels, 4 tentacles)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft. (15 ft. with tentacles)
Special Attacks: *Ashen Blade*, enervating bite, spell-like abilities, *summon tanar'ri*
Special Qualities: Damage reduction 20/good and cold iron, darkvision 120 ft., fast healing 15, immune to acid, immune to cold, immune to electricity, immune to petrification, immune to poison, lie in state, madness, outsider traits, resistance to fire 10, resistance to sonic 10, shroud alignment, spell resistance 35, telepathy 300 ft.
Saves: Fort +30, Ref +23, Will +28
Abilities: Str 35, Dex 22, Con 36, Int 16, Wis 5, Cha 32
Skills: Bluff +44, Concentration +46, Diplomacy +46, Disguise +44 (+46 acting), Intimidate +46, Knowledge (reli-

Adimarchus, (Angelic Form)

gion) +36, Knowledge (the planes) +36, Listen +30, Sense Motive +30, Spot +30, Survival +30 (+32 on other planes)
Feats: Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*true seeing*), Weapon Focus (greatsword)
Environment: Skullrot or Occipitus (507th layer of the Abyss)
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 23
Treasure: Quadruple standard
Alignment: Chaotic evil
Advancement: —

Adimarchus is a fallen celestial and the exiled demon prince of madness. Centuries ago, he led a rampaging army of demons on an invasion of Celestia. The heavenly host repulsed the demonic army, but at great cost: the angels of Celestia were forced to cast the part of Celestia occupied by the demons into the Abyss, tearing apart the fabric of the plane in the process. This massive chunk of planar matter came to rest on a layer of the Abyss called Occipitus.

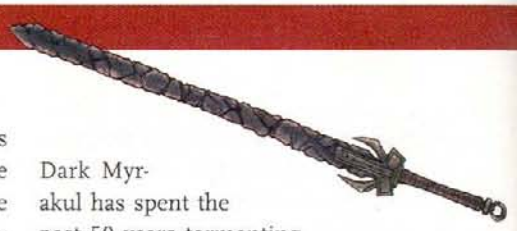
Adimarchus acted quickly to incorporate the wreckage of Celestia into Occipitus. In doing so, he became the demon prince of the plane, gaining almost limitless power there and becoming a demon prince in the process. Even in defeat, he knew success. For many years, Adimarchus ruled Occipitus, crafting from the ruins a great demonic empire.

Fifty years ago, Adimarchus made a move against a rival demon prince named Graz'zt. In the midst of a battle between Adimarchus's forces and those of Graz'zt, Adimarchus simply disappeared. Some say Graz'zt killed or captured him, while others say he fled when defeat seemed likely. A few even wonder if he had an attack of conscience and left the Abyss completely on a quest for celestial redemption.

The truth behind Adimarchus's disappearance centers on his love for Athux, a resolute aasimar paladin with six fingers on each hand. Five decades ago, Athux embarked on a quest to redeem Adimarchus's soul. The aasimar cut a swath across the tumorous plains of Occipitus and confronted the demon prince in his own throne room. Adimarchus and Athux fought until, exhausted, the demon prince sundered the aasimar's sword with his own dark blade. Clutching Athux by the throat, Adimarchus saw something in the aasimar's eyes that sparked his compassion. He could not kill Athux, nor could he subject the paladin to the torments of Occipitus. He tried to lure Athux over to the side of evil, but his attempts were half-hearted at best. Athux remained a prisoner on Occipitus and stood by Adimarchus's side as the demon prince plotted against his rival, Graz'zt. All the while, Athux fueled Adimarchus's rage against demonkind. A strange friendship bloomed, puzzling Adimarchus's minions and spurring some to betray him. Graz'zt learned of the planned assault against him and the alliance of Adimarchus and Athux, and in true demonic fashion, he conspired with Adimarchus's treacherous minions to overthrow his rival.

During the epic battle between Adimarchus's army and Graz'zt's hordes, demons swayed by Graz'zt captured Athux with surprising ease, imprisoning him in an asylum on Carceri. Adimarchus could not bear the loss of Athux, and the treachery of fiends rekindled the fallen angel's burning hatred. Adimarchus abandoned his hordes, his realm, and his evil ways, fleeing to Carceri to rescue Athux and find redemption. Alas, the tale of Adimarchus and Athux would not end well.

As Graz'zt's army crushed Adimarchus's abandoned demon horde, Adimarchus arrived at the demonic asylum of Skullrot on Carceri to find Athux overcome with dementia, the prisoner of one of Graz'zt's most powerful allies—a powerful undead priest of Graz'zt named Dark Myrakul. Unable to wrest the aasimar from Dark Myrakul's clutches, Adimarchus traded his own freedom for the paladin's restored mind and safe return to Celestia. The lichfiend readily agreed. The imprisoned Adimarchus watched as Athux shook off his "lunacy," only to transform into a black-skinned fiend with six fingers on each hand. Athux had misled Adimarchus from the start. He was, in fact, Graz'zt's devoted son. At that moment, Adimarchus realized his foolishness. Graz'zt had found a weakness in his rival—a long-buried desire for redemption that Adimarchus assumed he'd lost long ago—and used that weakness to dethrone his enemy. The very thought drove Adimarchus mad.



Dark Myrakul has spent the past 50 years tormenting Adimarchus with the knowledge that his futile quest for redemption and his pathetic pursuit of love ultimately cost him his realm, his freedom, his mind, everything. The lichfiend's words fuel the demon prince's madness. More black-hearted than ever, Adimarchus craves freedom, power, vengeance, and myriad other things no demon should ever possess. Fractured are the demon prince's thoughts. Unbeknownst to Myrakul, Adimarchus's demonic insanity has granted him the power to plant fragments of his consciousness in distant minds and twist them in profound ways. Living creatures "touched" by Adimarchus become strangely drawn to him. The Cagewrights represented the most dangerous of these "children" of Adimarchus, yet now that they have failed to rescue their "father," Adimarchus's will and rage have bloomed into something altogether new; he has transformed into two distinct creatures, each with a burning fury to escape Skullrot at any cost.

Adimarchus has two forms. The first is that of a beautifully androgynous angel with pale purple skin, golden tattoolike patterns that shift lyrically across his bare flesh, metallic gold wings as sharp as razors, and dead black eyes. In this form, he wears a golden breastplate and wields two weapons: a brilliant energy whip and a golden gauntlet fitted with sharp, birdlike talons. His other form is a lithe humanoid with ash-black skin, opalescent white eyes, black fangs, and four shadowy tentacles protruding from his back, each one ending in a lamprey's maw. In this form, he wields a smoldering greatsword made of ash and cinders. In either form, Adimarchus's right eye burns with a smoking flame, more so when the demon prince is incensed.

Combat (Angelic and Demonic Forms)

Adimarchus is a single being, but he can shift between his two forms on a whim. Changing between these two forms is a free action, and the demon prince's statistics change to match whatever form he has

assumed. Attacking Adimarchus is like fighting two separate creatures; damage taken in one form isn't carried over to the other. To kill Adimarchus, the characters must slay both of his forms. Characters may try to destroy the evil in Adimarchus by slaying his fiendish form; however, both forms have been equally tainted by evil, and killing one form does not redeem him. Adimarchus is wholly demon, and beyond redemption. In fact, unless both forms are slain, Adimarchus can reform his slain "half" after 1d10 days.

Although each of his two forms has unique special attacks and qualities, many of them are identical. Attacks and qualities that both forms have are detailed here.

***Summon Tanar'ri* (Sp)**: Once per day, Adimarchus can automatically summon 1d3+1 glabrezus or 1 marilith.

Lie in State (Su): If both of Adimarchus's forms die, Adimarchus (in his current form) disappears after 24 rounds. The body reappears dead but intact on Occipitus, his home layer of the Abyss. Any equipment Adimarchus was wearing or carrying at the moment of his death is likewise transported to Occipitus—and is likewise reconstituted if it was destroyed. *Dimensional anchor*, *dimensional lock*, and similar spells delay the body's transportation in this manner, but once the spell's effect ends, the body transports to Occipitus immediately. After lying in state for 1d100 days on his home plane, both of Adimarchus's forms are restored to full life. If Adimarchus is slain on his home plane, he is dead forever.

Madness (Ex): Adimarchus uses his Charisma modifier on Will saves instead of his Wisdom modifier, and is immune to *confusion* and *insanity* effects.

Shroud Alignment (Su): Spells and spell-like abilities with the good descriptor treat Adimarchus as if his alignment were good. Magic items are similarly fooled.

Combat (Angelic Form)

In this form, Adimarchus wears a *+2 breastplate of command*, and wields a *+3 anarchic clawed gauntlet* and a *+1 brilliant energy whip*. A clawed gauntlet functions like a spiked gauntlet, only it deals 1d6 points of slashing damage (instead of 1d4 points of piercing damage).

Implosive Strike (Su): Three times per day and no more than once per round, Adimarchus can cause an opponent to implode with any normal melee attack that deals lethal damage. In addition to taking damage, the target must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 28) or collapse in on itself and be killed instantly. Adimarchus must declare that he is using this ability before the attack roll is made. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Razorwings (Su): These gold-plated wings have razor-sharp feathers. Adimarchus can attack with them as an off-hand weapon, although not in the same round he attacks with two hand-held weapons. The wings deal damage as a *+1 keen scythe*.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): Always active—*mind blank* (self only); At will—*detect good*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *mirror image*, *greater teleport* (Will DC 28); 3/day—*blindness/deafness* (Fort DC 23), *entropic shield*, *greater command* (Will DC 26), *plane shift* (Will DC 26), *unholy blight* (Will DC 25); 1/day—*blasphemy* (Will DC 28), *flame strike* (Ref DC 26), *song of discord* (Will DC 26), *word of chaos* (Will DC 28). Caster level 30th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Golden Tattoos (Ex): Adimarchus's golden tattoos grant him complete immunity from any extra damage caused by critical hits or sneak attacks.

Combat (Demonic Form)

In this form, Adimarchus carries an artifact known as the *Ashen Blade*. This is a *+5 greatsword* that appears to be made of ash and cinders. Once per round, a creature struck by the weapon must make a successful Reflex Save (DC 18) or be immolated in a bloom of white-hot fire, taking 21d6 points of damage. Half of the damage is fire damage, and the other half results directly from divine power. A successful save halves the damage. Adimarchus typically activates this power on the first successful hit with his sword in a round.

Enervating Bite (Su): Any creature bitten by one of Adimarchus's tentacles gains 1d4 negative levels. On a critical hit, the bite instead inflicts 2d4 negative levels. The Fortitude save to remove these negative levels is DC 38; this save DC is Constitution-based.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): Always active—*mind blank* (self only); At will—*detect good*, *detect magic*, *greater teleport* (Will DC 28), *true seeing*; 3/day—*darkness*, *greater dispel magic*, *plane shift* (Will DC 26), *unholy blight* (Will DC 25); 1/day—*horrid wilting* (Fort DC 29), *maze*, *wall of force*. Caster level 30th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Scaling the Adventure

While "Asylum" is designed for four characters of 19th level, it can be modified for lower-level characters using the following methods. Don't forget to adjust the treasure found in the adventure appropriately.

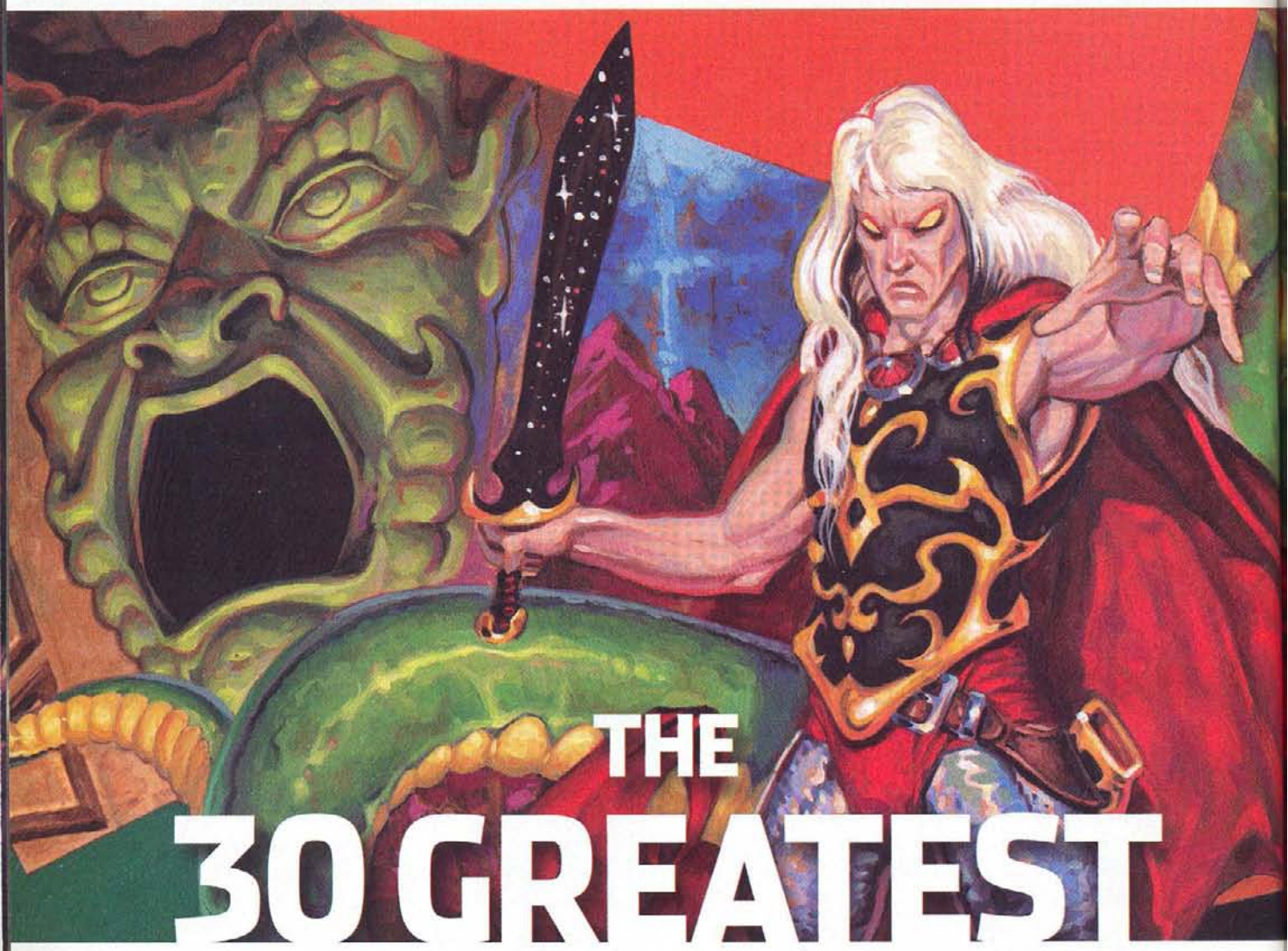
17th–18th-Level Characters: Creatures and NPCs should have their class levels lowered by 1 (or their racial Hit Dice by 2–4) for each level by which the average party level is lower than 19. In particular, the reborn Vhalantru and Dark Myrakul should have their Hit Dice or levels lowered. Additional NPCs (Jenya, or members of the Striders) may accompany the PCs on their journey into Carceri to provide additional support for lower-level characters. If things are going particularly rough for the PCs and they don't mind enlisting some fiendish aid, perhaps Byakala the maralith can be convinced to aid in the battle.

20th-Level and Above: Little work is required to make the adventure appropriate for 20th-level characters, apart from adding 1 or 2 class levels to the NPCs and villains in the adventure. You should consider reducing Nidrama's role in this event, and perhaps the PCs must deal with Adimarchus in three day's time, before Graz'zt arrives to inspect the prison!

FACES OF CAULDROD

Illustrated by Jeff Carlisle

1. Tarkilar
2. Aszithef
3. Skaven Umbermead
4. Triel Eldurast
5. Kazmojen
6. Ti'irok
7. Kaurophon
8. Tongueater
9. Thifirane
10. Vhalantru
11. Shebeleth Regidin
12. Dyr'ryd
13. Viirdran Daraqor
14. Kyan Winterstrike
15. Nulin Wiejeron
16. Ardeth Webb
17. Freija Doorgan
18. Embril Aloustinai
19. Thearynn Louvel
20. Alurad Sorizan
21. Ssythar Nahazir
22. Xokek
23. Gau Kleeoch
2004



THE 30 GREATEST

By Erik Mona, James Jacobs, and the Dungeon Design Panel

In very simple terms, DUNGEONS & DRAGONS is all about adventures. The rules themselves are important, as are the monsters fought and treasures won, but it's the situations and stories we remember weeks, months, and even decades later. Since 1986, *DUNGEON* has published scores of adventures every year. We like to think we know what separates the good ones from the bad. So, in this 30th year of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, we decided to take a look at all the adventures published for the game so far and anoint 30 of our favorites as the Greatest D&D Adventures of All Time.

To help us in this endeavor, we solicited feedback from sixteen top names in the history of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, representing each of the game's three decades of existence. We asked our distinguished panelists to provide a list of their "personal top 10," with some comments on why they chose each of their adventures. Then, we compiled the responses into a final list, sorted by total number of votes per adventure. To break ties, we referred to the individual rankings and made a few decisions of our own. Members of the editorial staff ought to enjoy some perks, after all.

This list is not definitive. It is an attempt to reach a consensus about the best D&D adventures of the past 30 years on behalf of eighteen industry professionals and prominent fans. Every fan of the game, particularly those who have been around a while, will have their own ideas of what should or shouldn't have made the list, and we welcome your feedback in our Prison Mail letter column and on our new message boards at paizo.com. Drop us a letter and tell us where we went wrong or, alternately, share your experiences with the listed adventures.

Before we move on to reveal what adventures made the list, we should mention a few that didn't. For starters, you won't find any *DUNGEON* adventures listed here. More than a few of our panelists included them on their personal lists, but in the end we just felt too uncomfortable boasting about what gems this magazine has created over the years. A sidebar on the next page includes a list of the best *DUNGEON* adventures nominated by our panel, presented as recommendations to our readers. Some of them no doubt belong on a definitive list, but since we lack the hubris to put ourselves on the top, that list will have to come from someone else.

Also missing are any adventures from the current crop of third-party d20 System offerings, all of which are compatible with D&D and were eligible for nomination by our panel. Indeed, a few panelists suggested d20 adventures, but no adventure received more than one nomination. Perhaps the adventures are too new, or had too small print runs to allow a consensus. Or perhaps our panel is too narrow in its vision. We suspect that none of these generally new adventures has yet passed the test of time, and that a similar list published in 10 years might contain several gems that are simply too new at present to merit "classic" status.

The adventures that do appear on the list represent our panel's favorites from first, second, and third edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. In this era of eBay and official online reprints, we hope interested readers make an effort

D&D ADVENTURES OF ALL TIME

to track down these gems. Perhaps some of them are already on your bookshelves or are tucked away, forgotten, in musty closets. Composing this article has been a thrilling, often surprising experience, and we think we speak for all our panelists when we say that the exercise has reminded us just how great these adventures were, and how much we'd like to run them again. Give them a try, and see if you agree.

THE DUNGEON DESIGN PANEL

This article would have been impossible without the contributions of our distinguished panel. All share a love for the game and an appreciation for the genius of a good adventure. They are:

Keith Baker: Keith Baker is the now-famous creator of EBERRON, the winning submission in 2002's Wizards of the Coast Campaign Setting Search, which received more than 10,000 submissions from D&D fans around the world. Baker co-authored the *EBERRON CAMPAIGN Setting* hardcover, as well as the setting's first stand-alone adventure, *Shadows of the Last War*. Baker's first DUNGEON adventure, "Steel Shadows," appeared last issue, and #117 will include "Fallen Angel," an exciting scenario set in the treacherous streets of Sharn, City of Towers.

Wolfgang Baur: Wolfgang Baur began his gaming career at TSR, Inc. as the assistant editor of this very magazine. By the time he left, he was the editor of DRAGON and had contributed freelance design and editing to PLANESCAPE, AL-QADIM, and almost every other campaign setting of the first half of the 1990s. Baur has written more than 100 magazine articles, including "Raiders of the Black Ice" and "Kingdom of the Ghouls" right here in the pages of DUNGEON.

Eric L. Boyd: If Ed Greenwood is the father of the FORGOTTEN REALMS, Eric L. Boyd is the setting's beloved stepson. In the mid-1990s, Boyd arose from the ranks of Internet fandom to co-author the *Faiths & Avatars* trilogy of seminal reference sourcebooks on the gods of the FORGOTTEN REALMS. Boyd's recent credits include *Drizzt Do'Urden's Guide to the Underdark*, *Cloak & Dagger*, *Serpent Kingdoms*, and *Faiths & Pantheons* (with our own Erik Mona). Boyd also acted as creative consultant and authored a chapter of the five-adventure "Mere of Dead Men" series that ran in DUNGEON throughout 1999. That series served as a sort of thematic precursor to the Shackled City Adventure Path that concludes in this issue.

Andy Collins: During his career as an editor for Wizards of the Coast's RPG and Miniatures R&D department, Andy Collins has contributed to such notable adventures as *The Standing Stone* and *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil*. His design credits include *Lord of the Iron Fortress*, *Libris Mortis*, the *Draconomicon*, and the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game*. As the official Sage of DRAGON, Collins answers a variety of difficult rules questions every month in the pages of our sister publication. He's now a senior game developer at Wizards of the Coast, and keeps a personal RPG design diary at www.andycollins.net.

Monte Cook: In the post-d20 System publishing environment, Monte Cook is the undisputed superstar celebrity game designer. Shortly after finishing the third edition *Dungeon Master's Guide* and the *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil* superadventure, Cook left Wizards of the Coast to found Malhavoc Press with his wife, editor Sue Weinlein Cook. At Malhavoc, Monte's designs have included popular d20 System products like *The Book of Eldritch Might* and the adventures *Demon God's Fane* and *The Banewarrens*. Last year, he published *Arcana Unearthed*, a "variant *Player's Handbook*." You can learn more about Monte and Malhavoc at www.montecook.com.

Bruce R. Cordell: Arguably the finest adventure designer currently working for Wizards of the Coast, Bruce R. Cordell is the twisted genius behind *Return to the Tomb of Horrors* and *The Sunless Citadel*. In TSR's *The Gates of Firestorm Peak*, Cordell introduced the horrific extradimensional Far Realm, a place of madness and terror that has since cropped up in books like *Tome & Blood* and the third edition *Fiend Folio*. Remarkably, Cordell grew up in South Dakota with Third Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide* author Monte Cook, and still plays in Cook's weekly game. Cordell contributed several designs to Cook's Malhavoc Press, including the popular psionic adventure *If Thoughts Could Kill*.

Ed Greenwood: As the creator of the Forgotten Realms, Ed Greenwood hardly needs an introduction in the pages of a D&D magazine. Greenwood introduced the Realms as the background setting of a number of seminal *Dragon* magazine articles starting in 1979. When TSR wanted a new campaign setting to help the company launch second edition Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, Greenwood's Forgotten Realms ably answered the call. Since then, scores of adventures, novels, and magazine articles have exploded from Ed's pen, making the Realms the most detailed (and probably the most beloved) campaign setting in the game's 30-year history.

Gary Holian: In 1994, before TSR had a notable online presence, Gary Holian founded GREYTalk, the Internet's largest and most influential World of Greyhawk discussion list. Today, GREYTalk boasts thousands of members and is celebrating the completion of its first decade of service. In 2000, Holian joined fellow GREYTalkers Erik Mona, Fred Wiening, and Sean K Reynolds to produce the *Living Greyhawk Gazetteer*, published by Wizards of the Coast. Since then, Holian has become a fixture in *Dragon* and *Dungeon*, keeping the spirit of Greyhawk alive with a series of exciting articles. The latest is "Exploring the Isle of Dread," from *Dungeon* #114.

Alan Kohler: Posting under the name "Psion," Alan Kohler has contributed more than 300 reviews of D&D-compatible RPG products to EN World, by far the largest independent community of D&D enthusiasts on the Internet. An archive of Kohler's reviews appears at www.enworld.org.

Mike Mearls: Mike Mearls burst onto the RPG scene in 2000, the first full-time freelancer to make a name for himself almost exclusively through d20 System design credits. After a few years of designing quality material for Atlas Games, AEG, White Wolf, Mongoose Publishing, and others, Mearls joined the ranks of Monte Cook's Malhavoc Press as a staff designer in late 2003. Mearls is a regular contributor to both *Dragon* and *Dungeon*.

Christopher Perkins: The current design manager for Wizards of the Coast's RPG and Miniatures R&D department got his start right here in the pages of *Dungeon*, and later went on to become one of *Dungeon's* most fondly remembered contributors and editors-in-chief. In addition to this issue's "Asylum," Perkins has authored dozens of adventures and articles for the magazine, including "Life's Bazaar," "Lords of Oblivion," and "Strike on Shatterhorn."

Clark Peterson: An attorney by trade, Clark Peterson doubles as the president of Necromancer Games, perhaps the most prolific adventure publishers in the d20 industry. Necromancer's products boast a "First Edition Feel" that hearkens back to the quality of many of the classic adventures listed in the panel's top 30. Peterson's professional design credits include *Rappan Athuk: The Dungeon of Graves*, *The Crucible of Freya*, and *The Player's Guide to the Wilderlands*.

Chris Pramas: After a successful freelancing career working on products for *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*, *Feng Shui*, and *Underground*, Chris Pramas landed a job as an RPG designer at Wizards of the Coast, where his designs included *The Guide to Hell*, *Slavers!*, and *Vortex of Madness*. In 2000, Pramas formed Green Ronin Publishing, which was one of two companies to release a d20 System adventure concurrent to the release of the third edition core rulebooks at that year's Gen Con Game Fair. That adventure, Pramas's own *Death in Freeport*, garnered both the Origins and ENnie award for Best Adventure of 2001. Green Ronin continues to contribute as a dominant creative force in the d20 industry.

Jean Rabe: For nearly a decade, Jean Rabe was the heart and soul of RPGA Network HQ, the tiny staff that manages the world's largest organization of roleplaying gamers. Her record-setting 70-issue stint as editor of *Polyhedron Newszine* left a legacy of good cheer and volunteerism that still serves the Network today. In 1994, Rabe joined TSR's design department, where her credits included *Vale of the Mage* and the *Tales of the Lance* boxed set. These days, Rabe puts most of her creative effort toward writing novels, including such Dragonlance yarns as *Dawning of a New Age*, *The Silver Stair*, and the popular Dhamon Trilogy. 2004 sees the release of *The Finest Creation*, the first book in her new fantasy trilogy from Tor Books.

John D. Rateliff: A noted Tolkien scholar who received his Ph.D. in fantasy literature, Dr. John D. Rateliff is best known to gamers as the author of *The Standing Stone* and the editor of classics such as *The Gates of Firestorm Peak*, *The Night Below*, and *Mark of Amber*. Rateliff also wrote several compelling and informative introductory essays for online "reprint" downloads of classic D&D adventures available on the Wizards of the Coast website (www.wizards.com) that are must-reads for anyone seriously interested in the history of D&D.

Bill Slavicsek: With a list of design credits that reads like a survey of the modern history of roleplaying games, it's no surprise why Bill Slavicsek is the director of Wizards of the Coast's RPGs and Miniatures department. For West End Games, Slavicsek was on the design teams for *TORG* and the second edition *Star Wars Roleplaying Game*. He was the driving force behind TSR's *Council of Wyrms* and the *Revised Dark Sun Campaign Setting*, and managed the Wizards of the Coast design team through the delicate transition to third edition Dungeons & Dragons. Managing the department hasn't kept Slavicsek out of the designer's chair, however, as he recently proved by co-designing the *Eberron Campaign Setting* hardcover.

RECOMMENDED DUNGEON ADVENTURES

Over the last 18 years, *Dungeon* has printed more than 300 adventures for the various incarnations of Dungeons & Dragons. Our panelists singled out the following ten adventures from *Dungeon* in particular as excellent representations of these hundreds. Many of these back issues are still available at paizo.com.

10. "Siege of Kratys Freehold," by Ted James Thomas Zuvich (#33)
9. "The Forgotten Man," by Steve Devaney (#75)
8. "The Lich-Queen's Beloved," by Christopher Perkins (#100)
7. "The Lady of the Mists," by Peter Åberg (#42)
6. "Eye of Myrkul," by Eric L. Boyd (#73)
5. "Life's Bazaar," by Christopher Perkins (#97)
4. "Into the Fire," by Grant & David Boucher (#1)
3. "Kingdom of the Ghouls," by Wolfgang Baur (#70)
2. "The Harrowing," by Monte Cook (#84)
1. "The Mud Sorcerer's Tomb," by Mike Shel (#37)

30 THE GHOST TOWER OF INVERNESS

1980

A mysterious Seer sends the party on a quest to wrest the priceless *Soul Gem* from the peak of an invisible tower, but can the adventurers conquer the puzzles and challenges that stand in their way? *Inverness* is a senseless jumble of random traps, including a room with a dangerous chessboard floor and a reverse gravity chamber, but it nonetheless remains a beloved classic. "By today's standards," says Monte Cook, "this adventure is nothing but a collection of clichés, but it set a number of standards for interesting dungeon design."

Author: Allen Hammack / **Cover Art:** Jim Roslof / **Published:** 1980

DEFINING MOMENT

At the Ghost Tower's apex, the adventurers discover that stealing the *Soul Gem* is more trouble than they'd expected. Random rays blast forth from the artifact, ripping the souls from victims and leaving behind colorless, lifeless husks.

29 THE ASSASSIN'S KNOT

1983

"Never gaining the iconic status of some of its contemporaries, this adventure and its predecessor [*The Secret of Bone Hill*] have been badly underrated through the years," says John Rateliff. "*The Assassin's Knot* not only featured the best assassin's guild this side of Sean Reynolds's *Slavers!*, but it marked a design breakthrough by providing a timeline of the villain's actions. For the first time, the bad guys do not simply wait for the PCs to come and get them but have a schedule of things that will happen if the PCs do not intervene. This adventure ended the passive dungeon; that it also had the villains take advantage of player expectations was simply icing on the cake."

Author: Len Lakofka / **Cover Art:** We Can't Tell / **Published:** 1983

DEFINING MOMENT

The best moment of a mystery is when the heroes figure out what's really going on. Given the open-ended nature of *The Assassin's Knot*, this could happen at any time, but it most likely results in a bloody confrontation against the local government at the neighborhood castle.

28 THE LOST CITY

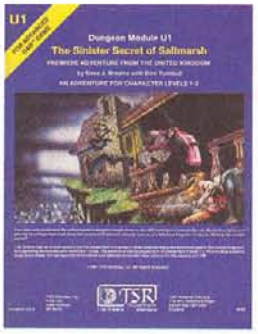
1982

Once the largest and most important structure in an ancient city called Cynidicea, a dungeon-filled ziggurat is now all that remains of a once proud civilization after a tentacled menace named Zargon brought ruin. Now split into three bickering factions, the albino and mostly crazed descendants of the Cynidiceans provide ample opportunities for not just combat but character interaction. One of the module's great strengths is that it provides maps and extensive notes for expanding the adventure beyond those five dungeon levels and into a massive underground lost city, including the lair of Zargon himself! This sunken city was recently revisited in issue #315 of *Dragon*.

Author: Tom Moldvay / **Cover Art:** Jim Holloway / **Published:** 1982

DEFINING MOMENT

The sunken ruins of Cynidicea were only roughly detailed in the adventure, but it and its insane population of drug-maddened albino cultists were immortalized by one of the first isometric maps to appear in a D&D adventure.



27 THE SINISTER SECRET OF SALTMARSH

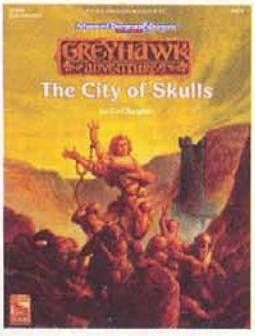
1981

What starts out as a simple expedition into an evil alchemist's manor soon turns into swashbuckling adventure with pirates, lizardmen, and assassins in the party's midst! Although this adventure has a fair amount of dungeon exploration, the primary focus is on atmosphere and investigation. *Saltmarsh* included many of the standard D&D trappings, but translating these conventions into a smuggler's ship made for a welcome change of pace. As Christopher Perkins says, "A simple haunted house tale... with pirates! It's not at all what one expects in a D&D adventure, and yet it feels like two complete adventures rolled into one."

Authors: Dave J. Browne with Don Turnbull / **Cover Art:** Dave de Leuw / **Published:** 1981

DEFINING MOMENT

Characters who prevail against the *Sea Ghost* and her crew not only win a valuable vessel filled with rich cargo, but have a chance to befriend a captured sea elf and a friendly pesudodragon—allies that come in handy in the adventure's two sequels.



26 CITY OF SKULLS

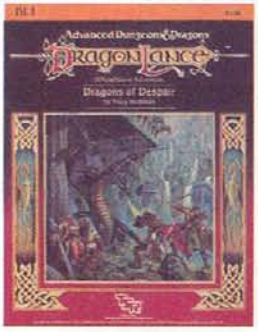
1993

City of Skulls sends the PCs into the heart of a half-fiend demigod's realm on a desperate mission to rescue an important prisoner from the Halls of Wretchedness, a terrible prison from which no one has yet managed to escape. The most innovative aspect of this adventure was the "notoriety" system. By awarding the party notoriety points for their actions, the PCs slowly blow their cover and attract more and more attention. A particularly notorious party could end up fighting the equivalent of an EL 21 encounter if they aren't careful!

Author: Carl Sargent / **Cover Art:** Jeff Easley / **Published:** 1993

DEFINING MOMENT

The warden of the lower Halls of Torment, a mutant half-demon named Zensher, holds court in his lair with his half-succubus consort Shelander and their gibbering demon minions. Canny PCs can actually ally with him in return for promising not to cause too much trouble.



25 DRAGONS OF DESPAIR

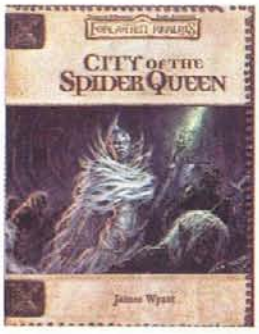
1984

Although this DRAGONLANCE adventure focused more on story and characters than most others, it did so without losing sight of what makes a D&D adventure truly great. In order to return divine magic to the world, the PCs must recover a sacred relic from a dragon's clutches, braving a sunken city infested with gully dwarves and draconians in the process. Bruce Cordell sums it up nicely: "The map of the sunken city was quite complex, with its various levels, waterfalls, and related groups of NPCs. Very moody and memorable. And it

Authors: Tracy Hickman, Harold Johnson, Douglas Niles, Carl Smith, Michael Williams / **Cover Art:** Clyde Caldwell / **Published:** 1984

DEFINING MOMENT

Playing Raistlin, Sturm, Tasslehoff, and the other Heroes of the Lance was fun, but the first appearance of the black dragon Khisanth as she burst from the well in the Plaza of Death to spew acid on everyone is what D&D is all about.



24 CITY OF THE SPIDER QUEEN

2002

This huge adventure for the FORGOTTEN REALMS features the Underdark, hordes of drow, a twisted demigod, and a battle on the Ethereal Plane. When the PCs investigate a recent rash of drow raids in the Daggerdale region, they soon find themselves embroiled in the chaos wrought by Lolth's silence, the driving event behind the *War of the Spider Queen* novel series. More than two dozen new monsters and magic items round out this Origins award-winning adventure. Just make sure to bring a cleric or two before you head down to the burning city of Maerimydra!

Author: James Wyatt / **Cover Art:** Todd Lockwood / **Published:** 2002

DEFINING MOMENT

What could make the climax of an adventure more exciting than placing it in a partially ethereal tower wrapped around a globe of negative energy? Try making that tower equal parts intelligent artifact, sentient construct, and undead behemoth!

CAMPAIGN MODULE WG4
THE FORGOTTEN TEMPLE OF THARIZDUN
by Gary Gygax
AN ADVENTURE SET ON GREYHAWK'S WORLD FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 5-10
TSR

23 THE FORGOTTEN TEMPLE OF THARIZDUN

1982

The PCs wander into the rugged mountains to the west of the Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth, seeking the lair of a band of norkers, gnolls, and giants that have been causing trouble. Little do they (or the PCs) suspect that their new home may just be the resting place of one of GREYHAWK's most notorious dark gods. As Bruce Cordell sagely observes: "Evil never dies... it just sleeps away the eons in weird cysts, waiting for foolish adventurers to disturb it."

Author: Gary Gygax / **Cover Art:** Karen Nelson / **Published:** 1982

DEFINING MOMENT

Deep below the temple's dungeon, in a place called the Black Cyst, brave (or foolish) PCs find a strange form imprisoned in a black haze. Is the form stirring? A fantastic amount of treasure is hidden nearby, but is it wise to steal from what may just be the sleeping body of Tharizdun himself?

22 THE LOST CAVERNS OF TSOJCANTH

1982

In this re-issue of one of the first D&D tournaments ever written, the adventurers trek into the treacherous Yatil Mountains on a quest for the lost treasure of the Witch-Queen Iggwilv. The pedestrian character of the caverns echoes the adventure's primordial nature, but *Tsojcanth's* detailed wilderness setting and extensive "Booklet 2" set it apart from its contemporaries. The latter introduced more than 30 new creatures, including the behir, dao, dretch, derro, dracolisk, marid, Baphomet, and Graz'zt.

Author: Gary Gygax / **Cover Art:** Erol Otus / **Published:** 1982

DEFINING MOMENT

The heroes fight their way through rockslides, underwater rivers, and a jumble of random encounters to reach a cleverly trapped room that contains Iggwilv's fabled treasure—her vampire daughter Drelzna, who sleeps in a spherical room under the weird light of *Daoud's Wondrous Lanthorn*.

21 DARK TOWER

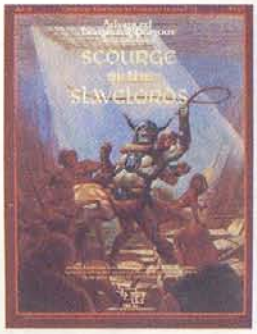
1980

This Judges Guild adventure sends the party into a massive dungeon built around a pair of buried towers. The adventurers fight their way down to the bottom level and to the entrance of the Dark Tower, and then fight their way back up again. John Rateliff says, "This massive 80-page book raised the bar on dungeons, providing not just a compelling adventure hook (set in what is still one of the creepiest villages in D&D), but also two opposed factions struggling over a multilevel dungeon, ending in a truly horrific final encounter (for those who made it that far)."

Author: Paul Jaquays / **Cover Art:** Paul Jaquays / **Published:** 1980

DEFINING MOMENT

In the final encounter, the PCs end up fighting a Chosen Son of Set and a 21st-level cleric lich. The villains' defeat only worsens the situation, as it causes the dungeon to start collapsing. Hopefully the PCs didn't leave a lot of monsters and traps in the way of their panicked flight out!



20 SCOURGE OF THE SLAVE LORDS

1986

Scourge combined the four wildly popular *Slave Lords* adventures into one supermodule. Bill Slavicsek says, "This module pits your adventurers against the ultimate party of slaver villains and has lots of memorable moments. I remember my players growing to hate the slavers and cheering each time they were able to take one of them down." Of particular note was the villain Markessa, who used surgery and magic to alter the appearance of prisoners, remaking them into duplicates of herself and brainwashing them to follow her commands.

Authors: David Cook, Allen Hammack, Harold Johnson, Tom Moldvay, Lawrence Schick, and Ed Carmien / **Cover Art:** Jeff Easley / **Published:** 1986

DEFINING MOMENT

Near the end of this adventure, the PCs are captured by the slave lords and thrown, naked, into the dungeons. The PCs must make do with what they can scavenge from the dungeons in order to escape, reclaim their gear, and finish off the slave lords.

19 AGAINST THE CULT OF THE REPTILE GOD

1982

Douglas Niles brings the town of Orlane and its creepy environs to life in just 28 pages. Every other townsperson is in the thrall of a mysterious cult, and the PCs are left not knowing whom to trust or where to turn. There's no safe temple or inn to retreat to for healing, as both have already been subverted by the Cult of the Reptile God. When the PCs finally head off to track down the cult leader, they find themselves in a dungeon that lacks the stout walls of most such locales and threatens to collapse in a sodden mess above their heads. As Ed Greenwood puts it, "Detective work, hunting for the villains, some monster-bashing, and a settlement detailed enough to use beyond the scripted adventure: a quiet little gem that has it all!"

Author: Douglas Niles / **Cover Art:** Timothy Truman / **Published:** 1982

DEFINING MOMENT

Turns out the "Reptile God" is a spirit naga named Explictica Defilus, and between her *charm* gaze, spells, poison bite, and the fact that the PCs probably spend the first few rounds of the fight stuck in a rowboat... well, let's just say that the DM better have an escape route handy once things turn sour.

18 THE HIDDEN SHRINE OF TAMOACHAN

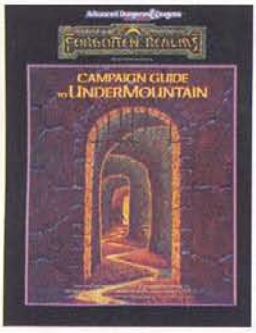
1980

Fleeing tenacious bounty hunters, the heroes cross the southern oceans to the steaming Amedio Jungle, where they find themselves trapped in vegetation-choked ruins modeled after those of the Maya and Aztecs of Central America. Amber-hued poison vapors fill the catacombs of a great step pyramid that boasts a talking hermit crab, a dying corn goddess, and a diorama of Hell. Like *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks* and *Tomb of Horrors*, Tamoachan featured a separate illustration booklet to help players imagine their deadly surroundings. "A solid and fun experience," says Bill Slavicsek.

Author: Harold Johnson and Jeff R. Leason / **Cover Art:** Erol Otus / **Published:** 1980

DEFINING MOMENT

Behind a massive circular calendar stone, the heroes discover a city in miniature arrayed on the floor of an immense chamber. The first character to step into the room finds himself on the safe side of a curtain of flame, and must face a doppleganger in single combat.



17 RUINS OF UNDERMOUNTAIN

1991

Eric L. Boyd had a lot to say about this one. "The granddaddy of all FORGOTTEN REALMS adventures is a three-level classic dungeon crawl, with the promise of six more major levels below. Ed Greenwood constructs a sprawling maze beneath the city of Waterdeep that is well integrated into the city above, governed by the all-but-mad Halaster Blackcloak, and has an amazing array of unique NPCs, traps, and monsters. There's plenty of room for the DM to express creativity, and enough hooks that there's never a lack for inspiration." A booklet of new monsters, several new spells and magic items, and a wall's-worth of maps combine to make it one of the biggest dungeon crawls ever.

Author: Ed Greenwood / **Cover Art:** Brom / **Published:** 1991

DEFINING MOMENT

Nestled within the depths of Undermountain, the treacherous town of Skullport is perhaps the most renowned "setting-within-a-setting." It's a mirror of the City of Splendors above, where all things depraved and villainous come together in an ever-churning pot of intrigue.

16 THE ISLE OF DREAD

1980

Gary Holian writes, "The first true module to introduce players to a 'wider world' beyond the castle, forest, and cave, *Dread* tore them from their medieval moorings and sent them careening across the waves to collide with a prehistoric lost world." "Who doesn't like hopping on a longship and sailing for days across the open sea to battle dinosaurs, pirates, cannibals, and the horrid kopru?" asks Mike Mearls. "It's hard to believe that all that material is crammed into 32 pages." The third edition debut of *The Isle of Dread* recently graced the pages of *DUNGEON* #114.

Author: David Cook and Tom Moldvay / **Cover Art:** Jeff Dee / **Published:** 1980

DEFINING MOMENT

Deep under Taboo Island at the Isle's heart, the PCs come to a cavern filled with bubbling mud pots, geysers, and mineral crusts. Two kopru lurk here, waiting to magically enslave anyone brave enough to dig this deeply into the Isle's sinister core.

15 CASTLE AMBER

1981

The PCs awake to find they've been transported in their sleep to a strange castle surrounded by poison mist. The denizens are either members of the lunatic Amber family or strange monsters. Suffusing the whole is a theme of whimsy and lurking horror. "A rare example of a licensed product that shines both for its treatment of the original setting and for its excellence as a D&D adventure," says John Rateliff. "Inspired by the 'Averoigne' stories of Clark Ashton Smith, the best of the *Weird Tales* writers, it has a distinctive quirkiness: dangerous and sensuous and slightly amused all at the same time. There's a reason it's inspired not one but two sequels."

Author: Tom Moldvay / **Cover Art:** Erol Otus / **Published:** 1981

DEFINING MOMENT

After exploring dozens of chambers within Castle Amber, the PCs are transported to Averoigne, a mythical version of medieval France besieged with necromancers, werewolf wizards, serpentine beasts, and a 100-foot-tall undead colossus.

14 DEAD GODS

1997

"All too often, D&D adventures miss out on the sort of teeth-gritting, edge-of-your-seat action that defines the world," says Alan Kohler. "This PLANESCAPE adventure by Monte Cook brings that spirit of adventure back in a race against time to prevent the resurrection of a demon lord." And when the returning demon lord is the much-missed Orcus, victim of the second edition-era demon pogrom that deprived the game of some of its best villains, D&D fans had a lot to celebrate, even if their characters weren't so thrilled about it. A crowd-pleasing return to the Vault of the Drow (from the 1978 adventure of the same name) ensured the adventure's place in D&D's history.

Author: Monte Cook / **Cover Art:** rk post / **Published:** 1997

DEFINING MOMENT

After having pined for Orcus's return ever since Jim Ward's "Angry Mothers From Heck" no-more-demons *DRAGON* editorial, D&D fans not only got to have their PCs play a role in the big guy's return, but they also got a chance to cavort on his gigantic dead body on the Astral Plane.

13 DWELLERS OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY

1981

"In this classic adventure, David Cook creates a lost jungle city in the great tradition of Edgar Rice Burroughs," says Eric L. Boyd. "The PCs can battle their way into the city through a labyrinth of traps and monsters or find their own way into the sprawling, jungle-cloaked ruins. There, they find a faction-filled city of bugbears, bullywugs, tasloi, mongrelmen, wizards, yuan-ti, and even an oriental dragon. Cook provides a host of backgrounds to motivate exploration of the city, but the map itself is inspiration enough." Wolfgang Baur had this to add: "Strange and wonderful volcanic ruins are cliché now, but so what?"

Author: David Cook / **Cover Art:** Erol Otus / **Published:** 1981

DEFINING MOMENT

This adventure may be best remembered for the monsters—it was from *Forbidden City* that D&D gained the aboleth, the mongrelman, the tasloi, and the yuan-ti. The aboleth that guarded one of the entrances to the city was worshiped by the local mongrelmen as a god.

12 THE FORGE OF FURY

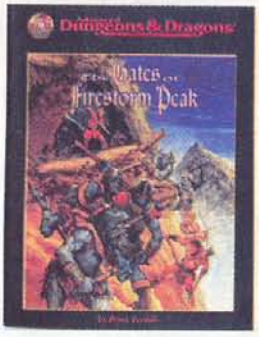
2000

In the second installment of Wizards of the Coast's third edition "adventure path," the heroes venture into an abandoned dwarven hold in search of the peerless armory of the smith Durgeddin the Black. A battle on bridges spanning the underground lake lair of the black dragon Nightscale is sure to leave marks on even the bravest adventurer's psyche. "To survive this adventure," observes Christopher Perkins, "the heroes must function as a team. The foes are smart and use their lairs creatively, and the black dragon at the end shows that you don't need a 20-foot wingspan to send adventurers screaming for their lives."

Author: Richard Baker / **Cover Art:** Todd Lockwood / **Published:** 2000

DEFINING MOMENT

A 2nd-level character might expect a few challenges beyond EL 4, but the most memorable moment in *The Forge of Fury* is an almost unbeatable EL 10 roper. Sometimes, my young adventurer, it is best to run!



11 THE GATES OF FIRESTORM PEAK

1996

Chris Pramas says, "The idea here was to do an adventure using the then-new *Player's Option* rules. That, as it turns out, was completely secondary to a healthy dose of Lovecraftian horror. You can't go wrong with Things-Man-Was-Not-Meant-to-Know." As John Rateliff puts it, "Anyone who's been a gamer long enough reaches a stage where he or she begins to feel it's all been done. This adventure is evidence that fresh talent will always come along and do the familiar with so much verve and so many personal touches that it all seems new again."

Author: Bruce R. Cordell / **Cover Art:** Jeff Easley / **Published:** 1996

DEFINING MOMENT

This adventure came with several miniatures-scale maps of key encounters, the most memorable of which was a bazaar of Underdark merchants called the Grand Promenade. Throw in a gibberslug-spitting duergar leader and his insane minions and you've got instant chaos!

10 RETURN TO THE TOMB OF HORRORS

1998

Christopher Perkins says of this massive adventure, "Vicious, cruel, vile, and deadly, the tomb of the demi-lich Acererak has claimed the lives of more adventurers than any other D&D adventure in the history of the game. Bruce Cordell took Gary Gygax's infamous dungeon and built another dungeon (and city) around it, making it an even more deeply and delightfully troubling place to visit." Monte Cook adds, "This sequel is Bruce Cordell's masterpiece to date. It's a gargantuan mega-adventure with amazing flavor and an interesting plot." John Rateliff calls it "a superb adventure on all levels: creative, creepy, deadly, and respectful of its predecessor while far surpassing it."

Author: Bruce R. Cordell / **Cover Art:** Arnie Swekel / **Published:** 1998

DEFINING MOMENT

A large portion of this adventure takes place in Moil, a nightmarish, lightless demiplane ruined by Orcus himself. All that remains are shattered towers that rise up out of emptiness—towers haunted by some of the most chilling undead ever to grace the pages of a D&D adventure.

9 WHITE PLUME MOUNTAIN

1979

Mike Mearls says, "This was the puzzle dungeon to end all puzzle dungeons. While it lacked *Tomb of Horrors's* sheer brutality, it made up for it with crazy, over the top, pure fun. A battle against a giant crab in a dome at the floor of a volcanic lake? Check. Reverse gravity water tubes with kayaking bad guys? Check. A completely frictionless surface, studded with pit traps? Check." Clark Peterson fondly recalls "the three artifacts: *Wave*, *Whelm*, and *Blackrazor*. Heck, you could chuck out the first two and just have *Blackrazor* and this thing is a classic."

Author: Lawrence Schick / **Cover Art:** Jeff Dee (fourth printing) / **Published:** 1979

DEFINING MOMENT

One of the rooms under White Plume Mountain is an inverted ziggurat, each tier of which is infested by different monsters. In order to reach the exit at the room's base, the PCs must deal with giant crayfish, giant scorpions, sea lions, and manticores.

8 RETURN TO THE TEMPLE OF ELEMENTAL EVIL

2001

The definitive third edition supermodule returns not just to plot elements introduced in the original *Temple of Elemental Evil*, but also to thematic elements from 1982's *Forgotten Temple of Tharizdun*. The secret force behind a resurgent Cult of Elemental Evil turns out to be Tharizdun himself, working through the twisted dreams of his most devoted, diabolical servants. "A worthy successor to the original," judges Mike Mearls. "This epic packs more action into four pages than most other adventures manage in 32. It's probably the single most memorable, unifying experience in third edition D&D. People who survived this adventure can rightly brag about it."

Author: Monte Cook / **Cover Art:** Brom / **Published:** 2001

DEFINING MOMENT

Players familiar with the opening moathouse dungeon were no doubt surprised to discover that a formerly innocuous pool now contained a shaft leading to a hidden shrine to Tharizdun, complete with a massive marble obelisk and a hungry grell guardian.

7 THE KEEP ON THE BORDERLANDS

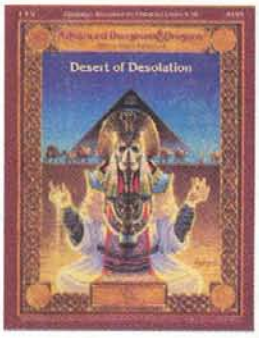
1979

Gary Holian notes how this adventure "...defined the 'foray' genre of D&D adventure by giving the PCs a home base (the eponymous Keep) and a nearby place in the wilderness (the Caves of Chaos) in which to stage dozens of adventures. Its inclusion in the D&D Basic Set helped introduce millions to the hobby and to the universal fear of stirges." John Rateliff notes that "later imitators would improve on the details, but there's no challenging the original's iconic appeal and status." And as Mike Mearls says, "Who cares that no one in the Keep had a name?"

Author: Gary Gygax / **Cover Art:** Jim Roslof / **Published:** 1979

DEFINING MOMENT

Unlike early adventures, in which the monsters got tougher the deeper you delved, the Caves of Chaos didn't have such a "safety net." Woe to the party that stumbles into the owlbear's den (cruelly located at the same "level" as the kobolds, goblins, and orcs).



6 THE DESERT OF DESOLATION

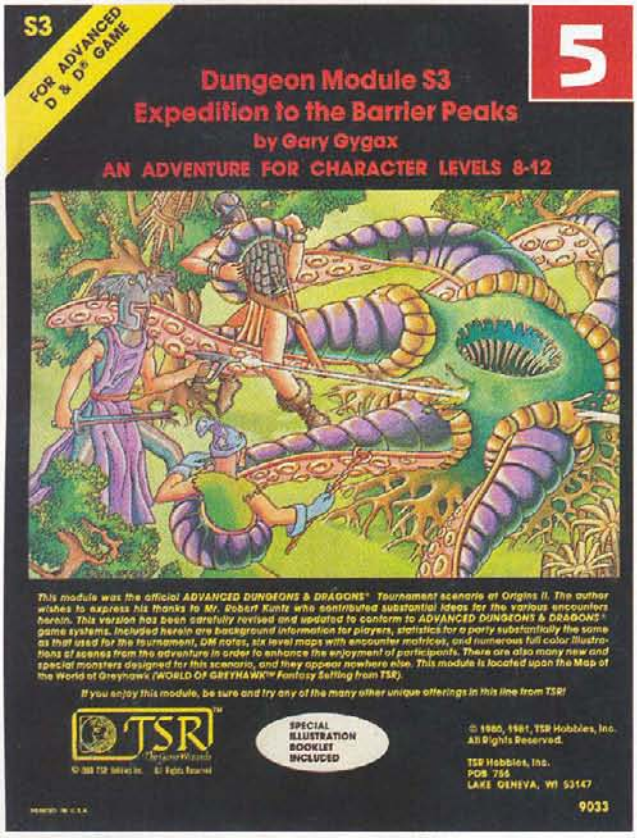
1987

The definitive "Egyptian-themed" D&D adventure, this series of adventures consisted of *Pharaoh*, *Oasis of the White Palm*, and *Lost Tomb of Martek*. Christopher Perkins observes, "This adventure introduced a new encounter format later adapted for third edition adventures." Indeed, this format is the precursor to the format DUNGEON uses today. Chris Pramas says, "The backstory [made it] so much more interesting than the typical dungeon bash, and the whole series dripped with atmosphere."

Author: Tracy Hickman, Laura Hickman, and Philip Meyers / **Cover Art:** Jim Holloway and Keith Parkinson / **Published:** 1987

DEFINING MOMENT

In Amun-Re's pyramid, the PCs can use the Dome of Flight to control or even reverse gravity. Those who aren't careful can send the entire party falling up 50 feet to the ceiling. Oh, and the palm trees in this room bear exploding fruit!


S3
FOR ADVANCED D & D® GAME
Dungeon Module S3
Expedition to the Barrier Peaks
by Gary Gygax
AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 8-12
This module was the official ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Tournament scenario at Origins II. The author wishes to express his thanks to Mr. Robert Kuntz who contributed substantial ideas for the various encounters herein. This version has been carefully revised and updated to conform to ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game systems. Included herein are background information for players, statistics for a party substantially the same as that used for the tournament, DM notes, six level maps with encounter matrices, and numerous full color illustrations of scenes from the adventure in order to enhance the enjoyment of participants. There are also many new and special monsters designed for this scenario, and they appear nowhere else. This module is located upon the Map of the World of Greyhawk (WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ Fantasy Setting from TSR).
If you enjoy this module, be sure and try any of the many other unique offerings in this line from TSR!
TSR
SPECIAL ILLUSTRATION BOOKLET INCLUDED
© 1980, 1981, TSR Hobbies, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
TSR Hobbies, Inc.
POB 756
LAKE GENEVA, WI 53147
9033

5

EXPEDITION TO THE BARRIER PEAKS

1980

DEFINING MOMENT

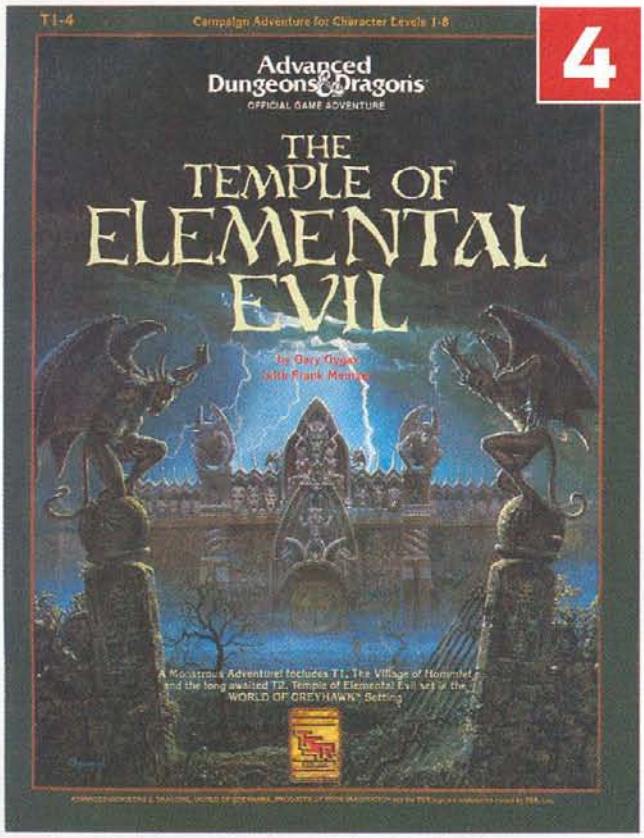
In the heart of the crashed spaceship lurks a huge indoor garden, rife with alien plants and animals just waiting to bring the pain to the PCs. The undisputed king of this realm, though, is the froghemoth, a massive amphibious menace that got its own full-page color illustration in the adventure.

What begins as a journey into the Barrier Peaks quickly turns into a cross-genre expedition into the realm of science fiction. The adventurers slowly discover that the strange metal cave in the mountains is actually a buried spaceship that crashed years ago after a plague killed its crew. The ship's robots and androids continued their jobs, and over time the numerous strange and alien creatures the crew had collected from hundreds of worlds began to grow and claim portions of the wreck for their own. When several of these aliens are released into the surrounding wilderness and make their way to civilization, the PCs are called upon to investigate and find a dungeon unlike anything that had come before.

Mike Mearls remembers the first time he flipped through this module. "I had this terrible, terrible conflict within myself to immediately tell my friends about it at war with a maniacal, desperate drive to keep it hidden at all costs." And Bill Slavicsek asks, "Who doesn't remember fighting robots and finding ray-guns in the bowels of a crashed spaceship? Swords and sorcery meets blasters and technology in a classic clash of genres—not something you want to do often with your D&D campaign, but it makes a memorable diversion."

Keith Baker was more impressed with the adventure's other notable feature—the art. "Aside from being a complete change of pace from every module that had been released before, *Expedition* came with an entire *book* of artwork. My favorite thing in the whole module? The before-and-after images of the carnivorous plant with the built-in bunny lure." And Monte Cook saw *Expedition* as a welcome ally. "When I was young, I tried to show the guys in my game group 'The Temple of the Frog' in the *Blackmoor* supplement to show that it was OK to mix science fiction elements into D&D. It wasn't until *Expedition* came out, however, that my opinion was vindicated."

Author: Gary Gygax / **Cover Art:** Erol Otus / **Published:** 1980


T1-4
Campaign Adventure for Character Levels 1-8
Advanced Dungeons & Dragons
OFFICIAL GAME ADVENTURE
THE TEMPLE OF ELEMENTAL EVIL
by Gary Gygax
with Frank Mentzer
A Monstrous Adventure! Includes T1, The Village of Hommlet and the long awaited T2, Temple of Elemental Evil set in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ Setting

4

THE TEMPLE OF ELEMENTAL EVIL

1985

DEFINING MOMENT

On the third level of the Temple, in an "inky chamber" behind a secret door, the PCs discover a black iron coffin holding the corpse of a vampire, a wooden stake driven into its lifeless heart. Like any true heroes, they lop off the foul creature's head—killing the *glamered* paladin Prince Thrommel of Furyondy.

It began in 1979 with an innocent little adventure called *The Village of Hommlet*. The adventure presented a fully detailed village that "remains, even today, one of the best places to set a campaign," according to Andy Collins. It also boasted of a follow-up adventure that would present the cult's primary headquarters, the Temple of Elemental Evil. It took six years, but that follow-up eventually came in the form of a 128-page monster that reprised *Hommlet* and added a five-level dungeon with some 200 encounters.

"This adventure set the standard for the dynamic dungeon," says Monte Cook, who revisited the locale in 2001's *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil*. "This is a well-organized and well-defended fortress rather than just a simple dungeon, with the bad guys replenishing their ranks and reacting with innovative strategies against the invading PCs."

Four factions (one for each element) competed with each other for control of the edifice, but all danced on the puppet strings of Iuz the Evil, a depraved demigod who actually shows up in the module's thrilling climax. Also present was Zuggtmoy, the so-called Demon Queen of Fungi, a merciless PC killer.

What John Rateliff calls "perhaps the single best dungeon crawl ever" has enjoyed such commercial success that it spawned seven printings of *The Village of Hommlet*, five printings of the supermodule (including two well into the second edition era), a Gen Con tournament in 1985, the *Return to the Temple* third edition adventure, two popular (and deadly) Living Greyhawk scenarios, and a monstrously popular computer game from Atari. "All that paper and ink spent printing and reprinting the thing," observes Jean Rabe. "Must be a keeper, eh?"

Author: Gary Gygax and Frank Mentzer /
Cover Art: Keith Parkinson / **Published:** 1985

S1
FOR ADVANCED D&D™ GAME
Dungeon Module S1
Tomb of Horrors
by Gary Gygax
AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 10-14
3
In the far reaches of the world, under a lost and lonely hill, lies the sinister TOMB OF HORRORS. This labyrinthine crypt is filled with terrible traps, strange and ferocious monsters, rich and magical treasures, and somewhere within rests the evil Demi-Lich.
This module was originally used for the Official ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® tournament at Origins 1. The author wishes to thank Mr. Alan Lucien who was kind enough to submit some of the ideas for this dungeon.
Included herein are background information, the Legend of the Tomb, and possible locations for the tomb on the WORLD OF GREYHAWK™ map. Also included are DM notes, characters specially designed for the module, and numerous illustrations to be shown to the players.
If you find this module intriguing, look for the TSR logo on future publications from THE GAME WIZARDS!
TSR
DELUXE SET OVER 24 ILLUSTRATIONS
1978, 1981 TSR Hobbies
All Rights Reserved.
TSR Hobbies, Inc.
POB 756
LAKE GENEVA, WI 53147
9022

TOMB OF HORRORS

1978

DEFINING MOMENT

The most memorable location in the most memorable dungeon in D&D's history is a pit trap-filled tunnel that ends in a huge green devil face with a gaping mouth of utter blackness that looks like a tunnel entrance (see this issue's cover). The "tunnel" is in fact a "fixed" *sphere of annihilation* that has probably killed more characters than any other trap in the last 30 years.

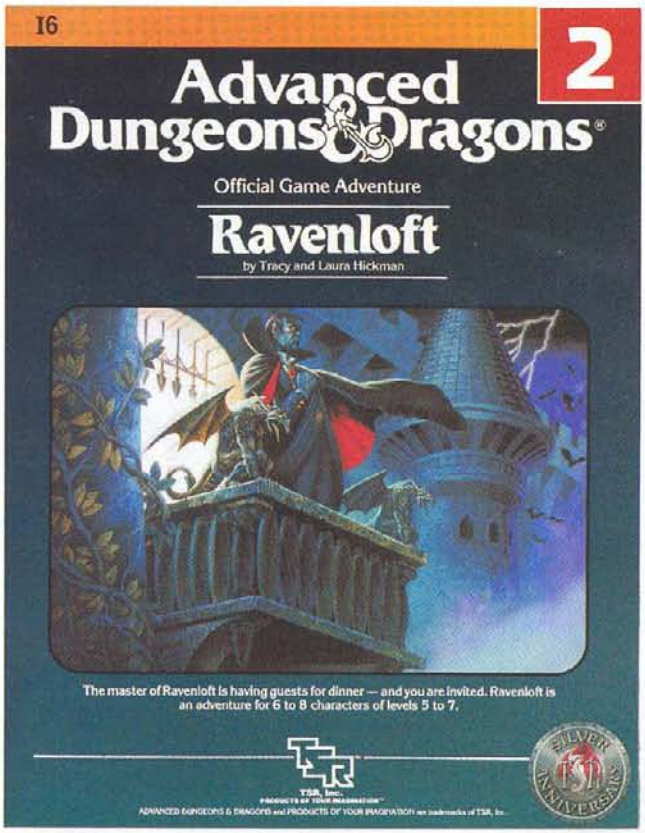
This is it, the deadliest, most impossible, most outright unfair dungeon crawl of them all. The grand daddy of killer dungeons. The PCs begin at the door of an ancient lich's tomb, and the adventure ends when the last hero has been killed. Virtually every room holds a deadly trap or fiendish creature, and a picture booklet featuring the art of first edition masters like Erol Otus, Dave Sutherland, and Dave Trampier shows the players in loving detail which dungeon fixings are about to kill their characters.

Clark Peterson puts it best: "This is the definitive module. It is not the best from a playability standpoint, but for sheer Gygaxian genius, which is what D&D is all about, it has no peer. This module has 'total party kill' written all over it. Not just in one spot, but in practically every room, trap, or encounter."

"Stop pushing me through the gender-changing archway or I'll just pull you in after me!" warns Bruce Cordell. "But wait, before we mess with that, where does this tunnel in the Great Green Devil Face go?" Bill Slavicsek remembers one player who learned the danger of stubbornness the way only *Tomb of Horrors* can teach it: "One player killed his character at the altar trap, then tried again with his next character (same result), and his next character (same result) before the rest of the party convinced him to stop touching the altar."

"The module was not constructed to be conquered," says Gary Holian, "but merely survived." And as Mike Mearls puts it: "Anyone who claims they made it through without losing a single PC from the party is a liar, a cheater, or both."

Author: Gary Gygax / **Cover Art:** Jeff Dee (second printing) / **Published:** 1978


I6
2
Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®
Official Game Adventure
Ravenloft
by Tracy and Laura Hickman
The master of Ravenloft is having guests for dinner — and you are invited. Ravenloft is an adventure for 6 to 8 characters of levels 5 to 7.
TSR, Inc.
PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION
ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION are trademarks of TSR, Inc.
SILVER ANNIVERSARY

RAVENLOFT

1983

DEFINING MOMENT

The catacombs below Castle Ravenloft consist of an area roughly 110 feet by 180 feet, and are filled with dozens of crypts. Each crypt bears a specific, unique epitaph, and many of them are infested with undead. One of the most harrowing crypts has a trap that uses teleportation magic to exchange PCs with wights. The teleported PC ends up inside a sealed coffin, while to his allies it appears as if he has transformed into a monster!

As *Ravenloft* begins, the PCs have their fortunes told at a gypsy camp. The results of this card reading actually determined not only the placement of important treasures in the castle, but also set the villain's goals for the adventure. All in all, a brilliant way to let fate drive the plot and evoke the mystery and mystique of Barovia, a gothic realm haunted by mysterious gypsies and monsters and ruled by Count Strahd Von Zarovich, arguably the most infamous villain in D&D history.

Bill Slavicsek observes that *Ravenloft* "was the first to really mix tone, story, and dungeon crawl into a D&D adventure, and it did it in a mere 32 pages." Andy Collins agrees. "The first time I can remember where atmosphere was as important as the monsters you were facing."

Clark Peterson notes "This module spawned a setting. *Ravenloft* had amazing maps, a great NPC antagonist—perhaps one of the best villains of all time behind Acererak the demi-lich and Eclavdra from the G-D series. You could arguably put the first few DRAGONLANCE modules here, but no single one of them is better than *Ravenloft*."

John Rateliff points out some more innovations: "An unsurpassed castle map filled with many interlocking layers and small cul-de-sacs; a clever randomizing plot element that insured even those who'd played the adventure before could never be sure what's going on; and the brilliant device of giving a monster character class levels make for one of the all-time great modules... A real breakthrough in adventure design."

Author: Tracy and Laura Hickman / **Cover Art:** Clyde Caldwell / **Published:** 1983

1

QUEEN OF THE SPIDERS

1986

DEFINING MOMENT

In a supermodule compiling seven great adventures, there are plenty of memorable moments to go around.

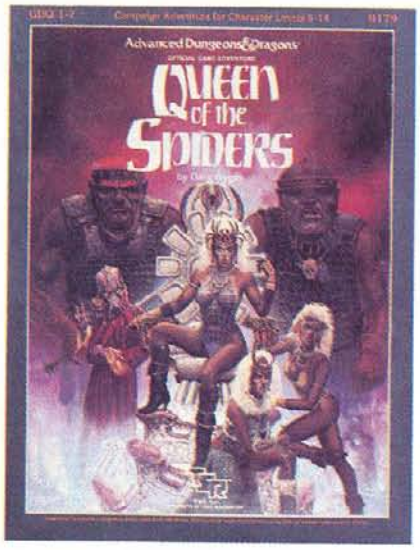
- Deep within the halls of the fire giant King Snurre, behind a wall covered with grasping tentacles and snapping beaks, DUNGEONS & DRAGONS players got their first-ever glimpse of the ebony-skinned drow in the form of Eclavdra, a villain memorable enough to appear in the *Epic Level Handbook* 24 years after her debut.
- In a moment that could come only from first edition, the PCs enter a seemingly unimportant Underdark chamber to encounter, lying in a niche in the wall, a 20-HD lich named Asberdies who has nothing whatsoever to do with the plot of the adventure. What fun!
- Atop a huge ziggurat in the hidden shrine of the kuo-toa stands an imposing statue of the fish-god Blibdoolpoolp, in all her naked glory. Characters who grasp her hand and pronounce her name correctly (no mean feat) are teleported to her ghastly undersea realm.
- Characters used to surface towns will enjoy (or, in the case of paladins, hate) the depraved drow city Erelhei-Cinlu, where "green cloaked illithids rub shoulders with dark elves... ghasts and ghouls roam freely, and an occasional shadow or vampire will be seen."

In 1986, TSR released the last great first edition supermodule, a 128-page compilation of no fewer than *seven* AD&D adventures, all of them classics in their own right. The epic campaign first began in 1978, with TSR's first stand-alone adventure, *Steading of the Hill Giant Chief* and its two sequels, *Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl* and *Hall of the Fire Giant King*. The adventures, later repackaged as *Against the Giants*, sent the heroes on a preemptive strike against three giant lairs as a response from civilized kingdoms lately terrorized by frightful raids from these mountain strongholds. In *Hall of the Fire Giant King*, AD&D players first encountered dark elves in the form of Eclavdra, the manipulative drow priestess behind the giant invasions. Even today the drow remain the most popular D&D villains, thanks in large part to their exciting introduction here.

"This bare-bones, hack-and-slash classic is so packed with action that you couldn't fit it all between two covers today without hurting yourself," says Andy Collins of *Against the Giants*. "I've run this adventure more times than any other." "This is the one," says John Rateliff, "that showed us all how to create a themed adventure, how to unfold a hidden plot hint by hint and clue by clue, when to leave something a mystery (the shrines of Elemental Evil), how to introduce a new monster type (the drow), and just how much grief a cave complex filled with fifty-six trolls can cause. Still an extremely effective adventure even today."

Against the Giants offered a tantalizing taste of the drow, but the rest of the series absolutely dripped with pure dark elf goodness. The next two adventures, *Descent into the Depths of the Earth* and *Hidden Shrine of the Kuo-Toa*, set the PCs on Eclavra's trail through the subterranean Underdark, where they cut through teeming troglodyte warrens and an eerie shrine to Blibdoolpoolp, the lobster-headed goddess of the piscine kuo-toa. "The Underdark has become a classic place to set adventures," observes Alan Kohler. "This is where it all started."

But a journey is nothing without a destination, and the original "D" series ended with an undisputable classic that would easily have made the top 5 on its own—*The Vault of the Drow*. Vault presented an overview of the dark elf metropolis Erelhei-Cinlu and the massive cavern that contained it, complete with competing drow noble houses, male and female fighting societies, and more intrigue than had ever before appeared in a D&D adventure. "Nothing like this had been done before," says Clark Peterson. "Sure, Judges Guild had done *The City State of the Invincible Overlord*, but this was an underground city of evil monsters—the drow, who, then, were new and mysterious as opposed to tired and overused as they are today."



Monte Cook agrees. "*Vault of the Drow* was probably the first 'open-ended' adventure where the PCs have more of a choice than deciding whether to go left or right at the T intersection. Plus, the drow in this module were wonderful and depraved but organized individuals. If I could find someone who wasn't familiar with this module (and those that precede it in the series), I'd run it today in a heartbeat."

The original series ended in dungeon module Q1: *Queen of the Demonweb Pits*, in which the adventurers ventured from the Vault of the Drow to the fabled Abyssal lair of Lolth, the Demon Queen of Spiders and patroness of the party's drow enemies. This excellent adventure, co-designed with artist David C. Sutherland III (Gygax's only credited co-author in the entire series), introduced a nightmarish realm of polished stone pathways suspended within a chaotic maelstrom of foul-smelling fog. In places, the web abuts a Material Plane world in the process of being absorbed into Lolth's Abyssal realm, such as the undead-filled Nightworld of the vampire Vlad Tolenkov or the elven Kingdom of Caer Sidi, where sophisticated elves might offer the adventurers a brief respite (or offer their heads to Lolth if they offend their delicate sensibilities). The adventure ends (of course) with a thrilling fight against Lolth herself. As Bill Slavicsek says, "A classic adventure full of strange locations, bizarre encounters, and weird maps. It was among the first adventures to try to illustrate the planes as a place to play, and it set the stage for a lot of what came after it. And it's got Lolth."

Despite the brilliance of its components, the seven adventures lacked explicit connections, and there's no good reason for the party to set off on the quest in the first place other than "there be giants in them there hills." The 1986 *Queen of the Spiders* compilation solved these flaws with new bridging material by Dave Cook and Jeff Grubb that introduced an exciting framing device. In the supermodule, the heroes come to Istivin, a city partially encased in a hemisphere of black energy. The PCs eventually discover that the hemisphere is actually the first sign of Lolth attempting to draw the characters' campaign world into her treacherous Demonweb! The series then becomes a race to get to the bottom of the strange affair in Istivin and, ultimately, to save the world.

"I chose *Queen of the Spiders* because it crams an the entire classic descent into the drow-held Underdark into one mammoth adventure and campaign setting—that promptly opens out into a smorgasboard of campaigns, thanks to Lolth's side-worlds reachable from her Web in the Abyss," says Ed Greenwood.

Jean Rabe provides another angle. "It's just the best—dark and mysterious and filled with an evil that's palpable and capable of sending a few shivers down your spine. And the Queen is one of the best D&D villainesses ever. Beautiful, crafty, and insidious. A fantastic adventure to run, and a just plain good read. Plus, the cover looks great."

Author: Gary Gygax with David C. Sutherland, Dave Cook, and Jeff Grubb / **Cover Art:** Keith Parkinson / **Published:** 1986

MASTERING THE GAME

STARTING A NEW CAMPAIGN (PART 3)

ALL THESE WONDERFUL TOYS

BY MONTE COOK

You've got some ideas for your new campaign, you've lined up a place to play, and your group is eager to start. There are still some important questions to ponder. One of these is whether or not you're going to use some kind of physical representation of characters on the game table or whether it's all going to be in your imagination.

MINIATURES

It's hard to deny how cool it is to have nice-looking miniature figures that represent all the characters, the NPCs, the monsters, the bartender in the tavern, the dungeon walls, and even the sacks of flour stacked on the floor of the old mill. But it's not as easy as just wishing it to be so. There are plenty of considerations, including time, money, and the mood of the game.

That miniatures cost a lot of money and can take up time (particularly if you're painting them) is obvious. Something that's not obvious is that using them can change the game in sometimes subtle ways. The more you give the players to look at on the table, the less they are imagining the scene in their heads. Role-playing games are ultimately an exercise of the imagination. The more you focus on the miniatures on the battlemat, the less likely you are focusing on the escapist enjoyment and the more likely you're going to be playing a tactical wargame.

It really depends on you, and on the players. Some people find miniatures distracting. They can't identify with a little metal figurine, or they forget that they are running a living, breathing character and instead just play with the "toys" on the table, ruining the chance for emersion. Worse, it's easy for the DM to fall into the trap of being creatively limited by his miniatures budget: "all I have are orcs and owlbears, so those are the only monsters I'll use." (If you do use miniatures, it's important to decide right off the bat whether you're going to allow "sub-in" miniatures to work for other types of creatures or not. That is to say, is it OK for your orc miniatures to also serve as gnolls, and your owlbear to also be an otyugh or a xorn?)

On the other hand, many people find it very useful to have a visual representation of where their character is in relation to the others and the NPCs. It helps unify the scene in everyone's mind, so that people can better share the experience and make well-informed decisions on what to do. Finally, nice miniatures that actually look like the characters and monsters in the game (at least a little) can help carry away the imagination from the real world into the world of fantasy, the way a nice piece of fantasy art can.

PAINTING MINIATURES

Most miniature figures available today come unpainted. Many require some kind of assembly, whether it be gluing on a base or attaching the arms, or even more complex operations. Painting miniatures is a fun and rewarding pastime—a hobby all to itself. But it requires a fair bit of money and a whole lot of time. Some DMs obsess more about how the miniatures diorama for each room of the dungeon looks than they do about whether it's actually a fun adventure or not.

Ultimately, unless time isn't an issue or painting miniatures is really your thing, it's probably best not to worry too much about the shading of the eyes of each figure on the table. Worse, if you spend a whole week on each orc figurine, and that one player around the table (you know the one) reaches for the bag of chips and sends them all crashing to the floor, it'll be hard not to freak out. And who needs that?

On the other hand, part of the DM's job is basically to "put on a show" for the players, or at least to provide them a nice stage to put on their own show. Nicely painted miniatures and set pieces of terrain can really "wow" them and add a whole new aesthetic aspect to the game.

PREPAINTED MINIATURES

Relatively new on the market, prepainted (often plastic) miniatures are now available. These are great because they save you the time of painting (and the plastic ones can even take quite a beating). In general, though, they are even more expensive than the unpainted miniatures, either because you're paying for someone else to do the work or because they come in random assortments of collectible packs and you have to buy a lot of them to get the ones you need.

CARDBOARD MINIATURES OR COUNTERS

Cheaper alternatives exist. You can get color counters or cardboard stand-up figures for pennies rather than dollars per figure. They may not have the visceral quality of 3-dimensional miniatures, but

if you're just looking for something to show how far the wizard is from the gnoll, these do the trick and they look nicer than pennies, candy, or dice.

PENNIES, CANDY, AND DICE

Not that there's anything wrong with using whatever's at hand to show where everyone is in relation to each other. Candy's fun because you can eat the foes you slay. Anything you've got laying around will work. Even little toys can be useful in a game. (Sometimes plastic dinosaurs, bugs, or what have you can be used amid proper miniature figures without a problem.) The drawback is, a player has to remember that the nickel is the statue in the middle of the room, the six-siders are the cultists surrounding it, and her character is the rook from an old chess set. One momentary slip and everyone wonders why she's moving the statue to attack herself.

PORTRAYING THE WORLD

Once you've determined what you're going to use (if anything) to portray the characters and the monsters on the table, you'll want to consider how you're going to show the environment around them. Again, you can use whatever's handy—a stack of books makes a nice dungeon wall and a pencil can mark the edge of an underground stream. You could also sketch it all on a large sheet of paper (or a number of smaller ones). For a game of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, though (and in truth, most games), you're going to want something with a grid to help measure distances and determine ranges for spells.

THE GOOD OLD BATTLEMAT

Probably the most common tool for setting the stage, battlemats are vinyl mats that have pre-printed grids (usually square, but sometimes hexagonal—and sometimes one of each on either side). They come in various sizes and because they are vinyl you can draw on them with wet-erase pens to portray whatever environment the PCs are exploring—a dungeon, a forest, a city street, or whatever.

If you use a battlemat, take the time to use different color pens to show the terrain—black for walls, blue for pools of water, red for burning fire pits, and so on. It's worth the small amount of effort to have a nice-looking drawing. Draw as much detail as you can without crowding the mat so much that it is just a meaningless jumble of lines and without taking too much time away from the action of the game.

Ultimately, though, the battlemat may be the worst of the best of the DMs tools. It's messy, it's difficult to draw on without being sloppy, and once the action has left the area you've drawn you've got to take the time to erase the whole thing to draw new stuff (which becomes even more frustrating if the players go back and you have to redraw old areas). A battlemat large enough to be really useful—that is to say, enough to have 4–5 encounters on before erasing—is often so large that it requires a large table, and requires the DM to walk around the table to draw on the far side.

A nice solution to this last issue is to have the players use the battlemat. While exploring an unknown area, they're going to want to map anyway—having them draw on the map saves you the time and effort. The need to erase to draw new areas becomes even more annoying in this case, however, if the players are relying on the battlemat map as their way to remember where everything is.

You could have multiple battlemats to help assuage the drawbacks, but they'd be somewhat unwieldy.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, remember to use the right pens with your battlemat. Almost all require wet-erase pens, often called overhead projector pens. Dry erase is permanent on a vinyl battlemat. Unless you want a hastily drawn *wall of force* to become a permanent memorial to a particular player (as I have on one of mine), stick with wet-erase pens.

DWARVEN FORGE MASTERMAZE

If you've got the money to spend, you can do far worse than getting a few MasterMaze sets from Dwarven Forge. These are pre-painted, molded pieces that look like dungeon (or castle, or building) walls, floors, doors, and other basics. The floors have a grid on them. They look great and can really add a lot of atmosphere to your game, particularly if you're already using some nice-looking miniature figures.

Other than price, however, MasterMaze has a few drawbacks. First, it's obviously limited in what it can do. Although impressively versatile, there are still plenty of room configurations that you can't build with them. And of course, it really only does dungeons and some building interiors well. If you're running an adventure set in the woods, you'll still want a battlemat.

Second, building the room layouts is slow. Mind you, once you've really gotten the hang of it, it's only a bit slower than drawing on a battlemat, but it's still a consideration. A table full of bored players waiting for you to build your big room is no good. Two solutions for this problem might be to have helpful and handy players help build a room after you've described its dimensions and/or trying to time your sessions so that you can build a major area while everyone else takes a short restroom/snack break. Some people build the dungeon ahead of time and then cover it with cloth or sheets of paper, revealing only what the PCs see as they see it, but this can cause metagame issues, since the players will automatically see the size of the dungeon and might even get clues to where a secret door might be based on what you've got down the on table. You'd also only be able to do this if you've got a large table and a lot of MasterMaze pieces. Most people are only going to have enough room and pieces to build a few rooms at a time.

The third and final major drawback is storage. Mastermaze pieces, once you've got enough to really build a dungeon, take up a lot of space. Further, toting them to another location every week would be a real hassle.

TACT-TILES

A relatively new arrival on the market, Tact-Tiles, from BC Products, are basically 1-foot-square pieces of a dry-erase board with a grid on them. The edges are cut so that they interlock (like puzzle pieces). Tact-Tiles don't really compete with MasterMaze, but they do have some advantages over standard battlemats.

Since you get 6–8 square pieces rather than one big battlemat, you can lay out a couple on the table with a drawing of the area around the PCs and then add to them

VARYING YOUR TACTICS

If you're using miniatures and a battlemat (or one of the other options), don't use them for everything. These things are tools to help visualize important scenes—usually action scenes. Don't feel the need to draw out every empty storage room in the dungeon and definitely don't construct every street scene the PCs encounter while buying provisions. On the other hand, it's a dead giveaway if you're suddenly showing the PCs where everything and everyone is on the layout of the tavern you've drawn on the mat. The players are going to be on their guard, knowing that there will be trouble.

The simple solution is to vary your tactics. Sometimes (sparingly), go ahead and draw out the street scene or the storeroom on the battlemat just to make the players wonder if something's going to happen. That way, when you do draw out the tavern map knowing ahead of time that the PCs are going to be attacked there, the players won't know for sure. You don't have to do this very often before the players know that using the battlemat and figures doesn't automatically mean something's actually going to happen.

In truth, though, it's just good to vary how you handle encounters anyway. Even if you use miniatures all the time, sometimes—in a simple action scene—ignore the figures and just play through it using only imagination and description. Varying things in this way can create a little spice in the game and it can keep things from getting bogged down with miniatures and positions when the situation is in fact best served played fast and loose—an encounter with a single guard, chasing down a pickpocket in the street, or dealing with a pit trap are the types of situations in the game where the action may be best suited to dealing with them quickly and without hesitation, lest they lose their urgency, and aren't so complex that people can't imagine it without aids.

with new tiles as the characters move. You can draw what's on the tile behind your screen and then hand it to a player to put down with the others. Perhaps best of all, when you run out of space, you can pick up the tile farthest from where the PCs are, erase just that tile, and use it to draw something new. Since the tiles interlock nicely, it's easy to slide the whole thing, so when the party moves off the map to the left you could, for example, pick up all the pieces on the right-hand side, erase them, slide the whole thing to the right, and put the clean tiles on the left-hand side.

Dry erase is, in my opinion, nicer than wet erase. First of all, it's more forgiving. Write on a Tact-Tiles tile with the wrong pen and household cleaner will get it off. Leave a pen mark on a dry-erase board for a week and it'll still come off well when you erase (not so with a wet-erase mat). Secondly, it's easier to get dry-erase pens, and you can get a larger number of colors. Lastly, dry-erase pens are a lot less messy than wet erase. You won't come away from every game session with stained fingertips.

But Tact-Tiles aren't perfect. Dry erase makes it hard to pre-draw on the tiles. You could, for example, pre-draw a whole encounter area on your battlemat at home, roll it up and carry it to the game with you, ready to go. Try this with Tact-Tiles and when you pull them out after carrying them from home much of your drawing will be smudged or gone just from carrying them. The material they are made of doesn't hold the ink of the pens perfectly, so it's harder to draw on them than on a battlemat. Lastly, while the interlocking edges are nice, it would be nicer if they had been somehow devised so that you could set one tile down next to another in any configuration rather than having to match them up in the only way they interconnect (like puzzle pieces).

SUMMING UP

f you're going to run a D&D game, you're going to probably, at least some of the time, use some method of displaying where the PCs are in an encounter in relation to each other, their foes, and the things around them, whether it's pennies on a bare tabletop or carefully painted miniature figures in a diorama. If you're going to run a campaign using other rules, you'll still want to consider the issue. The choice you make will set the stage for the way your players imagine an encounter and how they react to the situations you put before them.

Monte Cook is the author of the DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide. *He runs his own publishing company, Malhavoc Press, located online at www.montecook.com.*

Next Time: Developing and enforcing house rules and table rules (and the difference between the two).

RATING THE OPTIONS

	Battlemat	MasterMaze	Tact-Tiles
Appearance	3	10	3
Clean Up	3	7	9
Cost	10	1	8
Ease of Use	4	7	7
Portability/Storage	9	2	7
Speed	6	5	7
3D	3	10	3
Versatility	8	3	8
Totals	45	45	52

The above table shows my analysis of the various options for displaying the game environment, with each category rated on a scale of 1–10. The total at the bottom is a very abstract rating, assuming that all the categories are of equal value to you, which is probably unlikely.

INFORMANTS

BY RUSSELL BROWN
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ATTILA ADORJANY

Information gained during non-combat encounters can lead D&D players along the safest route to a hoarded treasure or give them clues about the nature of an ancient artifact. It can help them avoid traps or reveal the powerful evil nature of an apparently innocent NPC.

Enter the informants, NPCs with information the PCs need plus personalities and goals of their own. Informants can be the center of rewarding non-combat encounters where the PCs get to use their skills and do a little roleplaying. Making an informant a recurring NPC can bring some continuity and realistic grit to a campaign.

TYPES OF INFORMANTS

An Informant is any NPC who has knowledge the PCs need. Informants can be classified as follows, based on how they get their information.

1. Spy: A spy is a professional gatherer of information who uses skills in stealth, observation, and deception to be where he's not supposed to be and hear what he's not supposed to hear. These NPCs may be common street thieves, shrewd seductresses, or highly-paid military agents working undercover. They may use magic items like a *ring of climbing*, or a *hat of disguise*, and possibly spells like *disguise self*, *discern lies*, or *invisibility*. What sets them apart from PCs with similar abilities is their knowledge of a specific area or organization.

2. Insider: An insider is an NPC in a position that provides access to privileged information. A nobleman's overworked maid might gossip about the fact that the bride-to-be is under the effects of *charm person*. A retired

militiaman may know why there are always three guards posted where the river emerges from a mountain cave. And a stable boy might keep track of the comings and goings of some very important people.

3. Diviner: The diviner uses magic to gather information from a distance, from the past, or even from the future. Diviners can be arcane spellcasters like wizards, sorcerers, or bards, using spells like *clairaudience/clairvoyance, legend lore, scrying,* and *contact other plane.* They may have a *crystal ball* or a familiar they send as a spy into places the diviner cannot go. Clerics also make effective diviners, with their access to spells like *commune, divination,* and *speak with dead.* A cleric with the Knowledge domain also gains access to divine versions of many arcane divination spells.

4. Broker: A broker is a merchant who deals in knowledge. He is the bridge between those who seek it and those who provide it. His assets are his reputation and his insider contacts. Each broker has a special place where he can be found, possibly a tavern, temple, or a shop that he runs. The tools of his trade are skills like Diplomacy, Knowledge (local), Speak Language, and Sense Motive. A broker may also have magic items at hand, like a *cloak of charisma, ring of mind shielding,* or a *candle of truth.*

5. Monsters: You can make your campaign more interesting by using monsters as informants. This gives you a chance to use some of the neutral and good monsters in the *Monster Manual.* Has the couatl in the ancient temple discovered something interesting? Does the soldier's ghost have important information about how he died? What has the gynosphinx in the pyramid found out using her divining spells? Did the old bronze dragon up in the hills actually fight in the ancient battle where the amulet was lost, and does she know what happened to it?

FINDING INFORMANTS

If the PCs are looking for sensitive information, making contact with the right sources requires a Gather Information check. If they succeed, reward them only with the contact and make them work for the information. DCs for finding informant contacts might be as follows:

Gather Information DC	Informant Contact
16	Information Broker
20	Spy
22	Diviner
24	Insider

Note that if the PCs fail the Gather Information check and the information or contact they are looking for is critical to the adventure, an informant could decide to make contact with them. This could be more interesting, as the meeting will be on the informant's terms.

Always describe the setting where the PCs and informant meet. Is it a damp back alley or a raucous tavern? Is it a secret hollow below the docks, smelling of rotting fish and human waste? Does the informant have thugs nearby to keep intruders from disturbing the meeting (or jump to his aid if needed)?

When the PCs meet the informant, are they immediately on good terms? Do they need to make a Diplomacy check, or should they try to pass themselves off as someone else with a Bluff check? Do they trust the informant immediately or make Sense Motive checks? Is the informant telling the truth? Does he have false information but believes it to be true? Will the informant be a recurring NPC in the campaign?

WHAT DO INFORMANTS WANT?

An informant almost always wants something in exchange for information, but it is not always money.

1. Silence: The first thing an informant requires is secrecy and silence. They put themselves or their sources at risk and don't want any unnecessary attention. They may want to meet with only one or two members of the party, and only at a certain location. They may set up a secret signal to let the PCs know when a meeting is needed—a piece of string tied around a tree branch, or a poker set a certain way in a blacksmith's forge.

2. Help: Some informants, especially insiders, may give the PCs information in exchange for help with a task. The poor serving maid reveals where her master hides his magic cloak at night if the PCs free her father from prison. The bugbear guard may sell out his commander for free passage and a promise not to attack his home tribe. The vampire noble's bookkeeper may tell the PCs where his master sleeps because his master has discovered he has been stealing and is after him.

3. Money: Most informants work for money—information is their livelihood. There is no typical fee, as it depends on the amount of time, effort, and risk involved. For hired spies, the Treasure Values per Encounter chart on page 51 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* can be used as a starting point. If a spy faces a level 5 encounter to get information, he might expect a reward of 1,600 gp. Since a good spy probably avoids combat, pilfers some of his own reward along the way, and may sell the information multiple times, he might charge a quarter of the listed amount. Payment for diviners should be based on the NPC Spellcasting guidelines on page 107 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* but remember that divination spells may be riskier than casting other spells like *heal* or *raise dead.* For brokers, calculate the price their sources charge and add a 25% fee.

4. Information: Sometimes the PCs may have information that an informant may accept in trade. This is especially true of brokers, who view interesting pieces of information as investments. Do the PCs know how the orc uprising in the south is going? Have they seen any sources of opals or pearls in their travels, or any abandoned keeps now cleared of dangerous creatures?

With these tips in mind, informants can become a vibrant part of your campaign, allowing you an in-game method of feeding the PCs exactly the information you want them to have.

ABANDONED BUILDINGS

BY DAWN IBACH
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ATTILA ADORJANY

They are the corpses of society, one-time homes, shops, and warehouses abandoned by their tenants and left to slowly crumble into ruin. The smallest villages and the largest cities have them. Abandoned buildings follow in civilization's wake as surely as devastation follows a marauding army. Though they share decrepitude and dilapidation, abandoned buildings do not necessarily share their contents. This article presents 100 ideas for what might lurk within that sagging riverfront warehouse, the boarded up orphanage, or the sinister mansion on the hill.

d% roll Abandoned Building Contents

01 A chalk outline of a human on the wall bears knife marks centered on vital areas.
02 A pair of lost travelers use this place as shelter during their journey.
03 Starry-eyed runaways heading for the big city have taken shelter here.
04 Carvings on the walls indicate this was once a trysting place for young lovers.
05 This former tavern seems to have been recently used by bandits, but is now empty.
06 A group of young adventurers camp in this old tavern; they've found a keg of ale and are getting quite drunk.
07 This one-time bakery is abandoned, but tiny clawed footprints are visible in freshly-spilled flour on the floor.
08 Someone recently lit a fire in a partially crumbled fireplace here, using the bodies of rats for fuel.
09 A dark corner hides a trapdoor that leads to a crawlspace below; it sounds occupied.
10 A mute dwarf hides in the remains of the building's fireplace, a spoon clutched in his hand.
11 A surly drunk sleeps off his latest binge in this building's central room.
12 A huge sailing boat has been built in this warehouse; the boat looks to be seaworthy.
13 A former bordello, this building is now the home of a large pack of feral dogs.
14 An unattended homemade shrine to Hextor squats in the corner of one room.
15 A corpse draped in ruined leather armor lies half-buried under a partially collapsed stairwell.
16 Several corpses hang from the rafters by their ankles, their bodies drained of blood but bearing no obvious wounds.
17 A fresh corpse hangs by a noose from the rafters; the body is still swaying slightly.
18 A hole in the roof leads to a narrow ledge supplied with thieving tools and a dagger.
19 The doors and windows of this building may be boarded up, but a thick plume of smoke escapes from the single chimney.
20 A parchment with a drawing of a skull is nailed to the front door—a sign of plague (actually a forgery).
21 A collection of skulls line what were once bookshelves, and a street urchin claims the place belongs to him.
22 This stone building is fitted with wooden catwalks throughout, several of which are rigged to collapse if weight is placed upon them.
23 A pile of ten leather pouches, each burned with a different symbol, lies on a window sill; each pouch contains 1d4 sp.
24 The walls between this building and the next are missing, transforming the place into one huge open space.
25 A beggar pops up from a trapdoor in the floor and is startled to find visitors in the building.
26 This former tavern now serves as the home of a starving family.
27 A former candle shop, this building is now home to orphaned twins.
28 A teenaged thief cares for his three younger siblings here.
29 A group of vigilantes meets here nightly.
30 The root cellar contains a cramped tunnel that leads to an alley a few blocks away.
31 Dirty old blankets conceal a tunnel entrance that leads outside the city walls.
32 Three to six inches of water cover the ground floor atop a completely flooded cellar.
33 Barrels of rainwater fill this place, top to bottom.
34 Broken glass covers the floor of this building, far more than can be accounted for by the structure's broken windows.
35 A rag doll and a small blanket sit on the floor of the largest room in this building.
36 A group of five lepers lives here.
37 Three runaways from abusive parents hide out here.
38 The cellar of this home houses a laboratory for making poison.
39 This former home has been gutted by fire.
40 A lame blind woman lives here; urchins bring her food and she heals their wounds.
41 Mold of dozens of different colors and types grows everywhere in this former bakery.
42 This place shows signs of recent repairs.
43 A suicide pact has taken place here; the bodies are still warm.
44 This former home is gutted; a single beam holds the roof up and the floor is covered with spikes.
45 A beggar woman is giving birth here, alone.
46 Ornate carvings cover the beams and doors of this building.
47 A mad beggar has captured a bunch of rats here and claims he's their king.

48 A wild animal is kept caged in the basement.
49 A humanoid child hides in a closet, claiming a "beetle-man" chased her into the building.
50 Many bundles of herbs and dried flowers hang from the rafters.
51 The first floor has caved in, exposing a web-clogged root cellar below.
52 Large centipedes have taken up residence in this former orphanage.
53 The former home of a shut-in dwarf, the ground floor has stone furniture.
54 Only the outer shell of this home remains; the area is open from the basement to the sky above.
55 A family lives here; they rent from a man who doesn't own the building.
56 A collection of scalps hangs by the hair on nails over the fireplace mantle.
57 A large crow keeps a nest here; a few shiny trinkets glint in its nest.
58 Scavengers have torn out much of the wood in the back wall for firewood.
59 Although human-sized from the outside, the interior of this abandoned house has been rebuilt to be sized for a halfling.
60 A corpse dressed in silk robes clutches half a treasure map in her hand.
61 The floors of this building are rotted and won't support more than 50 pounds before collapsing.
62 A former potter's home, clumps of clay and broken pottery shards litter this place.
63 A huge broken loom dominates the living area; someone has been trying to use it.
64 The windows and doors of this former smithy are all oversized; only the anvil and forge remain within.
65 Some of the bones under the shelves in this former butcher's shop look humanoid.
66 The one-time home of a miser, all of the floorboards and walls have been torn apart by looters.
67 A small group of children have claimed this building as heir hideout; toys lie scattered about everywhere.
68 A young fugitive wizard hides here; she uses her abilities to steal food and scare away intruders.
69 The entrances to this building are guarded by traps that hurl rotten eggs at intruders; a small pile of rotten egg ammo sits in a wooden box
70 This ruin was a church dedicated to Pelor before it was abandoned.
71 Unwelcome at the nearest inn, a barbarian chose this abandoned home as a place to spend the night.
72 A group of pigeons has taken residence here; judging by the small pile of bones in a corner, someone is catching and eating them.
73 A tall thin man waits here with a sack of 30 silver coins; he flees at the first chance.
74 A kidnapper and his dog are holed up here with a victim: the young son of a wealthy local merchant.
75 A young woman hiding out to avoid an arranged marriage has made this place her home.

76 A pair of poor newlyweds have relocated here until they find jobs and a better place to live.
77 A young wizard collects guano from the floor; he waves intruders away impatiently as the bats above become agitated.
78 This place houses a large table etched with a pentagram at its center; skeletons in rich robes and holding iron goblets sit in chairs around the table.
79 The locals believe this place is haunted; it is in fact situated such that the prevailing wind blows through the poor workmanship and creates a howling noise.
80 A collection of bloody chains and manacles hangs from nails in the rafters.
81 A prostitute entertains a famous client here.
82 This place looks lived in; a dog sleeping on a pallet is in fact a polymorphed gnome.
83 This former weapon shop hides an old mold for casting archaic blades.
84 Old protection runes are carved into the mantle of the fireplace here.
85 A secret door in the floor of this former home leads to a basement still that produces dangerous liquor.
86 A wanted criminal hides out here, waiting for the heat to die down.
87 A scrawny child hides from bullies in this shop; he may be asleep.
88 An invisible chest inside the kitchen fireplace contains some childish charcoal sketches and a small sooty blanket.
89 Words written in blood on the wall here mark the building as a new murder site for a notorious villain thought long dead or captured.
90 Several people lie on the floor, bound and gagged.
91 Urban fey have made this place their secret playground.
92 A cursed book sits on a stone table; touching the book triggers the curse.
93 A flying familiar spies on those who enter the building, watching them from a hole in the roof.
94 A ruined pentagram is etched into the floor of this one-room building; a heavy fluttering can be heard in the attic above.
95 A strange chill fills this whole building, especially the cellar, which is rimed with frost.
96 This house is littered with dozens of poison needle traps.
97 Several magical traps (many still active) can be found in this building.
98 Two animated skeletons, their bones carved with runes, guard this empty building.
99 The interior of this structure is humid, hot, and filled with tropical plants transplanted here by an insane druid.
100 The former resident's angry spirit haunts this place.

FOUR FIENDISH FOUNTAINS

BY FRANK BRUNNER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ATTILA ADORJANY

Fountains are a perennial dungeon temptation. All adventurers know the dangers that a fountain can harbor: acid geyser traps, hostile water elementals, gates to Blibdoolpoolp's blasphemous realm, and worse. Despite this, few PCs can resist investigating a fountain. And who can blame them? The rich tradition of fountains that grant ability score increases or other wondrous bonuses lends a powerful allure to even the lowliest wall font.

This entry in the Campaign Workbook explores several ways to use fountains in your campaign. Adding one to your existing world is as simple as taking a 5-foot square on your dungeon grid and writing: "Here jets the Lich's Spout!"

FOUNTAINS IN THE CAMPAIGN

The fountains detailed here fall into two categories.

A **quest fountain** can be a single pool that launches an adventurer's career (think of Excalibur rising from the lake) or a series of linked fountains that fulfill a prophecy (see the *Fountains of Shrennil*, below). When using a fountain as the pivotal feature of a quest, the DM should be careful to build an appropriate sense of grandeur. She should foreshadow the event with references in ancient texts, PCs should pick up rumors and half-truths about the fountain in riverfront taverns, and at least one PC could find, when finally arriving at the fountain, that his likeness was foretold and sculpted into the fountain's base.

A **treasure fountain** allows a DM to reward adventurers with something other than coins, gems, or magic items. An especially powerful reward may be limited. For example, a bonus to Fortitude saves granted by a font in a Pelorian shrine might function only during daylight hours, or only at times when the character is exposed to natural sunlight.

FOUNTAINS OF FORTUNE AND FURY

Alchemist's Blessing: This rococo fountain is tiled with gold and alchemical silver. Any potion poured into the fountain is amplified so that the next three people to drink from the fountain gain the benefit of the potion. If the same person drinks twice from the fountain, the benefits do not stack, but the

drink does count as one of the three "uses" of the fountain. An *alchemist's blessing* fountain can amplify one potion per day.

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, *limited wish*; Price 17,000 gp.

Fountain of the Laughing Rogue: A copper jester tops this fountain dedicated to Olidammara in his aspect as the god of luck. Anyone drinking from the fountain is randomly affected according to the table below. The fountain can provide three magical drinks per day (the same person can benefit—or suffer—more than once per day).

d20 Roll	Result
1–2	All gold coins in a 10-ft.-radius spread are changed to silver.
3–4	Drinker is affected by *Tasha's uncontrollable laughter* for 1 minute (no save).
5–6	Drinker grows whiskers and is affected by *cat's grace* for two hours.
7–8	Drinker gains a +4 luck bonus on Sleight of Hand checks. If the drinker does not successfully pickpocket at least one item per day, he suffers 2 points of Dexterity damage. This effect can be lifted by a *remove curse*.
9–10	Drinker gains a +2 luck bonus on his next save.
11–12	Drinker suffers a –2 penalty on his next save.
13–14	All creatures within a 10-foot burst are affected by a *blur* spell. In addition, the drinker is affected by a *haste* spell.
15–16	Via an effect similar to the *disguise self* spell, the drinker is glamered to look like his worst enemy. This effect functions at caster level 20, and is permanent until dispelled.
17–18	Water in the fountain becomes fine wine for the next minute. Up to ten flagons worth 10 gp each can be gathered if sufficient vessels are at hand.
19–20	Drinker may re-roll his next attack roll, skill check, or saving throw as if he had the Luck domain ability.

Strong illusion, transmutation, and enchantment; CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, *cat's grace, Tasha's uncontrollable laughter, disguise self*; Price 20,000 gp.

Fountains of Shrennil (major artifact): Said to be a disciple of St. Cuthbert while that god still walked the world as a man, Shrennil constructed six linked fountains scattered hundreds of miles apart. Each fountain represents one of the ability scores, and when a character drinks from a fountain, he takes a –1 penalty to the associated ability score. After he has drunk from all six fountains, however, the penalties are removed, and he gains a permanent +2 sacred bonus to his Wisdom score and a permanent +1 sacred bonus on his Will and Fortitude saves. Typically, the completion of the *Fountains of Shrennil* quest is linked to an event of major consequence in the campaign world and confers an additional bonus related to that quest. For example, it may be prophesied that only one who has suffered the path of Shrennil the Disciple can turn back the advancing army of Avernus (thus, completing the quest grants a permanent +4 sacred bonus on all weapon damage rolls against devils).

Strong transmutation; CL 25th.

Lich's Spout: This fountain can take any form, although typically it is a simple stone basin with a 2-foot plume of water at the center. When a lich's phylactery is placed anywhere within the basin, negative energy infuses the water. Any undead that drinks from the basin is cured of 2d8+5 points of damage. Any single undead may so benefit only once per day by drinking from the font. A cleric with the ability to rebuke undead who drinks from this font gains a +4 bonus on his rebuking checks for a period of six hours after drinking. A living creature that drinks the water takes 2d8+5 points of damage from the negative energy. A successful DC 13 Will save halves this damage.

Liches who wish to use their *spouts* as traps often blanket the fountain with *Nystul's magic aura* and *misdirection* spells so that the *spout* detects as good, and some even sculpt holy symbols of good deities into the basin. Naturally, a lich goes to great lengths to conceal his phylactery within the *spout*. A DC 35 Search check is necessary to discover the secret compartment containing the phylactery.

Strong necromancy; CL 11th; Craft Wondrous Item, *inflict moderate wounds*, creator must have access to a lich's phylactery; Price 10,000 gp.

Fountains of Mystery

The following table can help you generate quick fountain effects for speedy dungeon construction. Roll a d20 and consult the results below.

1–2	Two (or more) widely separated lapis lazuli fountains are actually portals. Using a sapphire cup to drink from one *teleports* the imbiber to the other.
3–4	A drink from a natural geyser's runoff *neutralizes poison*.
5–6	The font in an ancient kuo-toan shrine fills with enough adhesive liquid in a day to coat one shield (*Monster Manual* 164).
7–8	Once per day, a fountain in a witch's garden can be used as a *crystal ball*.
9–10	A sip from a fountain at a shrine of Ehlonna grants a +4 sacred bonus on Wild Empathy checks for one day.
11–12	Ooze seeping from a shrine dedicated to elemental earth acts as *antitoxin*.
13–14	Placing a charged magic item in the fountain enhances the next spell effect generated by the item as if by the Maximize Spell feat.
15–16	A spellcaster completely immersed in an obsidian and jet fountain loses all her prepared spells for the day.
17–18	Anointing one's head with the spray from a baroque wall fountain grants *protection from evil* for 24 hours.
19–20	An ancient spirit harbored in the fountain momentarily possesses the body of the drinker and reveals the location of a *sphere of annihilation*.

REFUGEES

BY MIKE MEARLS
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ATTILA ADORJANY

Not everyone who takes to the road has the weapons, spells, and magic items of an adventuring party. Sometimes, an emerging threat forces travelers to take flight without food, water, or even clothes durable enough to withstand the elements. The very monsters that the characters seek to defeat could send hundreds of commoners to the road, creating a variety of complications that the characters must handle.

This article presents a few ideas for refugees that you can spring on the characters while they travel to an adventure site or between settlements.

Famine: Driven from home by chronic food shortages, refugees flood the roads in hopes of finding a place with more abundant supplies. The characters might feel morally obliged to help these unfortunate victims, particularly if the party includes a paladin or a good cleric. However, these noble intentions can quickly spawn complications.

Starving mobs may demand that a cleric use his magic to *create food and water*, and the scene could turn ugly if he cannot or will not do so. With potentially hundreds of refugees on hand, a single adventuring party may lack the resources to feed even a handful of them. Those that the party can help might become ripe targets for hungry thieves or greedy bandits eager to spread misery and hoard food for themselves. Even normally good people may turn violent and angry if they feel that the

party is holding out on them. Agents of the PCs' enemies might spread rumors that they could feed and help everyone, but they simply choose not to.

Non-Human Refugees: The metallic dragons take flight, one by one leaving the region and flying to the south. Dragons that no one had ever seen or heard of before emerge from hidden lairs and take wing. Surely, something terrible is afoot.

Not all refugees are humans or humanoids. Monsters may leave a region based on trouble only they can perceive or threats that pose a risk only to them. The characters might come across a gold dragon on the road who is badly injured and seemingly frightened. Anything that can scare a dragon is likely to make the characters at least a little nervous.

Encounters with powerful creatures fleeing an area can serve to foreshadow impending trouble. They can also highlight that many different creatures dwell in an area, emphasizing the mysterious nature of magic and the possibilities of a fantasy world.

The threat that causes dragons or other creatures to flee might never pose a danger to humanity, or it could simply progress from striking at the mightiest to the weakest foes it may face. Such a flight could fulfill a prophecy that heralds an impending evil, or it might ignite some other trouble. Perhaps the dragons, elves, or other fleeing races kept many evil creatures in check. Gnolls emerge from the forest to attack human settlements, while chromatic dragons swoop over cities without fear of their metallic cousins.

Evil on the Road: Small bands of orcs strike at villages and homesteads. The duke sends in his soldiers, but they find only defenseless orcs and their children on the road. The warriors are long gone.

The refugees could be evil humanoids driven from their home by an even greater evil, or perhaps by the party's own efforts. After the characters defeat the goblin king and his army, survivors might spread across the land in search of safe havens. Outlying farms come under attack from hungry, vengeful goblin warriors, while the fleeing monsters burn and loot isolated villages as they flee the region. The characters might find that they create just as many problems as they solve after defeating an opponent.

In the opposite situation, the nominally evil creatures may flee some threat that could soon pose a danger to civilized lands. A fearsome red dragon might conquer several humanoid tribes and slaughter the rest. As orcs, ogres, and giants flee their mountain homes to avoid slavery, they loot and pillage human settlements to survive. If the PCs simply kill these creatures without wondering why they have entered the lowlands with little equipment and few supplies, the dragon might achieve total surprise when it leads its hordes on a campaign of conquest.

Disease: Plague spreads across the land, driving the people before it. With each wave of refugees, a few more infected victims carry the disease to new lands and untouched cities. Settlements at the edge of the outbreak shut their gates in hope of stemming its tide.

Even in a world with a relatively high level of magic, plagues remain a threat. An outbreak in a city might drive many people to flee, with a few diseased individuals (perhaps those with cases that are in the early stages) among them. Villages and towns bar their gates against outsiders, and in some cases fortified walls might defend a ghost town, its inhabitants killed off by the disease.

In this situation, every encounter with refugees could be a tense, trying experience. The PCs, particularly good ones, may want to help, but unless the party has *remove disease* they might be signing their own death warrants. Against this backdrop of death and misery, apocalyptic cults, opportunistic monsters, and other threats could spread across the area.

Protecting the Weak: As defenseless commoners take to the road, a variety of threats could arise to victimize them. Dire wolves stalk the roads, looking for easy meals. Bandits demand tolls for traveling the roads, while opportunistic merchants charge outrageous sums for their goods, counting on their mercenary guards to hold back any desperate men.

The characters may find that doing too much simply makes them targets for attackers or draws dozens or hundreds of desperate folk to them for protection. They must walk a fine line between helping those that they can and trying to do too much. They might find that with each good deed, a dozen more problems come to their attention. They might even have to set aside the pursuit of a hated enemy in order to ferry helpless refugees across dangerous terrain.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing: The kindly hermit offers what food and water he can spare to the refugees who come near his cave. What few notice is that each night, more people go missing near his home.

Not all refugees are helpless. Some may use the large numbers of people on the road to move about in disguise. An evil wizard might use magic to cloak his nature and hide amongst the large number of people on the road. Unless the characters stop and question every group of unfortunates they meet, they might never find him. Monsters that are capable of taking a humanoid form, such as doppelgangers or lycanthropes, could openly wander the region, seeking out promising victims and tricking would-be heroes with their cover identities.

The characters could be fooled by a band of monsters or robbers who pose as helpless refugees. If the party stops to help them, they might spring an ambush or lead them to trouble. A group of robbers could poison the food they offer to others, leaving their victims dead or comatose while they steal any valuables they can find. Such "do-gooders" might easily escape the notice of harried characters, who might be so glad to see someone else dealing with the problem that they fail to question them closely.

THE STORY SO FAR . . .

BY KYLE STANLEY HUNTER

Downer

Deep within a foreboding forest, down a slime-slicked hole, a team of intrepid adventurers descended into the chilly depths of the Underdark. Serjenko, a tiefling warrior priest, led five other hardened mercenaries on a punitive strike against the double-dealing beholder Manglecramps. Manglecramps had piqued the ire of the Infernal Bureaucracy with numerous labor violations, such as refusing to honor diabolic contracts and dispensing unsanctioned disintegrations. Serjenko's mission didn't go so well.

Astrid

A sniping drow guard's arrow ignominiously cut down Loops, the band's troubadour, as he crossed the dungeon's threshold. The guard, a jaded career dungeon creeper named Downer, led the adventurers on a perilous chase deeper into the complex, and succeeded in splitting up the team. Downer trapped a seemingly naïve elven sorceress, but was confronted by Tagget, the party's crafty halfling rogue. After a brief parlay in thieves' cant, the two discovered they were lodge brothers in affiliated guilds. Downer grudgingly agreed to let the rogue and sorceress escape.

Tagget

Downer had grown weary of interloping treasure hunters and the tyrannical employ of Lord Manglecramps. At the end of an already exhausting day, all he wanted was a good meal and a solid 4 hours of rest. Unfortunately, a few of Downer's so-called friends (including his sycophantic sorcerer brother Aristide) witnessed his uncharacteristic lapse in brutality, and ratted him out to the boss. Downer's loyalty and job performance were called into question, and he responded to the charges with profound indignity. He stabbed Aristide through the shoulder and quit his job. During the scuffle, Serjenko and his remaining strike force used Downer as a homing beacon, and teleported directly into the beholder's redoubt. Acting under the authority of the Prison Plane of Carceri, Serjenko leveled charges of malfeasance against the eye tyrant. Both sides suffered terrible casualties, while Downer casually and impartially observed.

Aristide

Manglecramps's servants dispatched Serjenko's crew after only a few seconds of combat. Though mortally wounded, the beholder still threatened to dismember Downer once he emerged from hiding. With impeccable timing, Astrid, the elven sorceress Downer had allowed to escape, returned and burst Manglecramps with a volley from a discarded dwarven arquebus. The relieved drow mistook the maiden for Aristide's disguised imp, and paid for his flippancy with a parting shot from Astrid that blew off his foot.

Now unemployed and injured, the two brothers struck a truce and made off for the subterranean metropolis, Oubliette. Aristide tallied Downer's debts, the first for the *stasis* spell protecting Downer's foot stump, and later for the "accidental" killing of Aristide's imp, who foolishly rejoined them still disguised as Astrid. The imp's folly, and subsequent dismissal, was not a total loss. During the previous melee, the creature had secured one of Manglecramps's prized artifacts, the Ulolok, Titan of Chaos. Unsure of its purpose or function, the brothers grudgingly lugged the 50-pound bronze vessel back to the city.

Downer, an atheist, was forced to seek medical care for his blown-off foot from a mad xorn necromancer named Stonebones. The best he could do for the drow was to fit the magical iron boot of a redcap over the pulpy appendage as a temporary cast. While in the xorn's workshop, Downer and Aristide caught wind of a secret proj-

Needleman

ect Stonebones was developing for the town's mind flayer prefect, Garriok. After leaving the necromancer's, the brothers settled down for some well-earned rest at a local pub. There they met a friend, a dark stalker intelligence broker called the Needleman. The

Izank

Needleman informed the pair that the Ulolok was a battery, capable of releasing chaotic positive energy. Another friend, a frantic illithid named Izank the Accursed, interrupted their discussion. A pack of unusual hunters was hot on Izank's tail—githzerai, normally not encountered outside the Chaos Plane of Limbo. Energy erupted from the Ulolok, killed a few of the githzerai warriors, and turned the tide of the fight. The Needleman managed to snare one of the hunters. Employing an unusual talent, Izank ate the githzerai's brain and read his memories. A profound conspiracy began to unfold.

The drow brothers had returned to Oubliette on the eve of an infernal invasion. For reasons unrevealed, murderous devils from the Nine Hells ran amok in the city's cramped streets. Izank learned from the githzerai that a "winged drow" had arranged from Lolth's temple for the githzerai to hunt illithids under the invasion's shadow. Now suspicious of Downer, who wears a signature pair of mechanical wings, the party split up. Against Aristide's wishes, he and Izank were to alert Garriok of the conspiracy, while Downer and the Needleman hid the Ulolok.

Garriok

Meanwhile, others struggled to make sense of the fiendish invasion. A cabal of the city's sinister leaders met in the chambers of Araaka, high priestess of Lolth. Garriok pressed Kalro, the rakshasa Prince of Thieves, to get to the bottom of Manglecramps's fate and his fabled weapon's disappearance.The aboleths, their grimlock slaves, and the realm's vast undead population were coldly indifferent to the city dwellers' rallying cry. At the meeting's close, Kalro discovered and nearly killed an unexpected spy. Tagget, Serjenko's halfling rogue companion, was smoked out of the shadows, but managed to escape to the streets. There he disguised himself as a dark creeper and transmitted reports to an unknown superior.

Araaka

Kalro

Later, in the cloistered tower of the temple, a shadowy winged consort presented Araaka a strange gift—a pair of chain devil thralls to weed out drow not loyal to the temple. Against Downer's commands, Aristide led Izank to the temple. The two split up, and Aristide was subdued by one of the kytons. The chain devils presented Aristide to the high priestess, and the sorcerer promptly sold out his brother and companions by pledging his loyalty to Lolth. During Aristide's audience, Izank explored the temple invisibly, and discovered the identity of the winged conspirator, a male erinyes named Pike. Pike reported to an ice devil superior that Araaka was under his control, but Bazral, the devil, was still concerned about the Ulolok. Pike discovered the snooping illithid just as Bazral *gated* away.

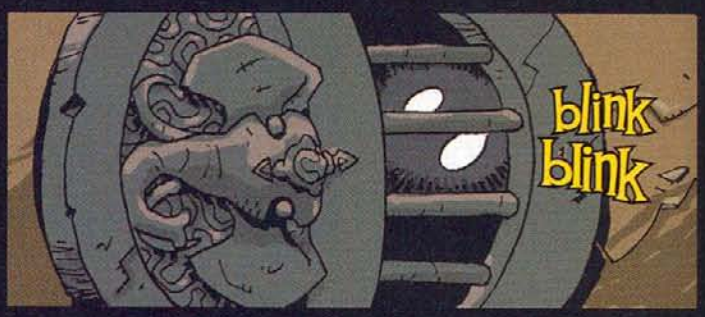
On the streets below, frustrated by Downer's iron-shod pace, the Needleman abandoned the drow, tethering him to a large flying devil. After dragging the drow across the city's rooftops toward his destination, the devil nonchalantly severed the line, plunging Downer to a presumed death. Apparently of its own will, the Ulolok activated as Downer fell, temporarily turning his mechanical wings into real ones. With little acumen, the airborne drow crashed into the cemetery, just outside his isolated demesne. A disembodied voice heckled the drow, but before Downer's retort, the Ulolok fell from the sky and knocked him out cold...

Pike

"FUNNY THAT YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT US, WHILE WE KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT YOU.--
"YOU STOLE YOUR WINGS FROM THE TECHGNOMES OF MECHANUS.
"YOU WERE THE ONLY SURVIVOR OF THE GRAY CORSAIR'S EXPEDITION DOWN THE GREAT CHASM.
"YOU SCORED THE GO-AHEAD GOAL AGAINST VAMPIRES UNITED, AND SPIKED THEIR GATORADE WITH HOLY WATER.
"YOU DATED A 12HD MEDUSA FOR 3 YEARS BEFORE KILLING HER."

TAKE A LOOK AT YOURSELF NOW. IS THIS THE END OF OUR HERO?
UUNNNGH...

I DIDN'T KILL HER.


blink blink

HOO-HA! WHA! GHOULS!

NOBODY HERE BUT US GHOSTS. REMEMBER ME?

YOU KILLED ME IN CHAPTER 1. LOOPS, THE DEAD BARD, AT YOUR SERVICE.

WHOA. I FIGURED THEY'D JUST RAISE YOU.
THANKS FOR GETTING RID OF THOSE GHOULS, ANYWAY.
YOU NEED A WHOLE BODY TO RAISE DEAD. YOUR IMP ATE A COUPLE OF MY FINGERS. I CAN'T EVEN PLAY PROPERLY NOW.
AND I DIDN'T SCARE OFF THE GHOULS. I RECKON THEY DID.
THOOM
THOOM
MEP MERK MERK MEP. BRAK BERK MEP MEP.
THE BEAST HAS CAUGHT A SCENT. COULD DOWNER HAVE STUMBLED UPON OUR LITTLE WEAPON TEST?
HEH-HEH. YOUR NEW ARMY WILL FLUSH HIM OUT, AND PROVE A NASTY SURPRISE TO THE UNDEAD WHO REFUSED TO HELP US.
TO BE CONTINUED

WIL SAVE 3:

THE SEARCH FOR FUN

Illustration by Stan Shaw

"We're on a quest! A quest for fun! We're going to have so much @!#$ing fun, we're going to need plastic @!#$ing surgery to remove the @!#$ing smiles from our @!#$ing faces!"

—Chevy Chase as Clark W. Griswold, *National Lampoon's Vacation*

"The whole point of gaming is to have fun. If you're not having fun, something's wrong with your DM, or your party... or with you. Playing the game should never get in the way of having a good time."

—Advice given to me by some long-forgotten gamer

I closed my eyes and shook my d20 loosely in my fist. In my mind, I saw the numbers rolling round across its surface, and visualized it landing on the table, the number 20 on top. I desperately needed a good roll.

"Come on, baby! Daddy needs a critical!" I said, and let the die fly out of my hand.

I held my breath as the die tumbled dramatically across the table, in slow motion. It bounced over my miniature, kicked off the edge of my pizza crust, and came to a rest against the side of my *Player's Handbook*.

It was a 4.

"DAMMIT!" I said, as the rest of my group laughed. It was the fifth time I'd thrown a 4 in seven tries.

"The dwarf manages to evade your... uhm... attack," Cal said, dryly. Everyone laughed, harder this time. I joined them.

Cal clicked a button on his laptop and grimaced.

"How many hit points do you have?"

I looked at my character sheet. "Uhh... fifty?"

"Fifty, huh?" my friend Martin said. "That's pretty good for first level."

"Well," I said, "maybe it's more like nine."

"Well, you have two, now." Cal said.

"Ouch." I said.

It was the first time I'd played in years. I'd spent a lot of time and energy building this character, and I was more than a little emotionally invested in him. He was about to die in his first combat, and I was having too much fun with my friends to care.

"Rugrat is getting wasted by this dwarf," Cal said. "Does anyone want to help him?"

"Wait." I said. "*Who* is getting wasted?"

"You are."

"But you just called me 'Rugrat.'"

"Right. Rugrat."

Nick, who was playing a highlander, said in a deep brogue, "Aye! He's just a wee tiefling... a wee rugrat."

I protested. "My character's name is 'Rhugat!'"

"Didn't you get the e-mail?" Martin said.

"What e-mail?"

"The e-mail that we're all supposed to call you Rugrat."

"Uhm... no. I guess I missed that one." I said, while Cal whistled innocently.

The thing is, I'd actually put some time into coming up with my character's name. I wanted something that sounded exotic, (he is a tiefling, after all) and I wasn't going to take an existing name from one of my books, but I also knew that I had to choose carefully, or I'd end up with a horrible nickname... like 'Rugrat,' for example.

"Okay," I said. "Rugrat is going to crawl away from the dwarf and suck his thumb."

The battle raged on, and I ran upstairs to get a Guinness.

I heard a roar—well, the five-person version of a roar, anyway—when I was in the kitchen, and I hurried back downstairs.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Shane's ogre tried to tumble past the dwarf and—"

The image of an ogre trying to tumble was too much for me, and I burst out laughing.

Shane said, "I rolled... poorly."

"Are you dead?" I said.

"I'm not dead yet!" Shane said, in a weak voice.

"Oh, you'll be stone dead in a moment." Nick said.

"I think I'll go for a walk!" Shane said.

"You're not fooling anyone, you know." Martin said.

"I feel happy! I feel happy!" Shane said.

I looked at Cal, who was now laughing so hard, his head was in his hands. "Uhm, Mr. Dungeon Master, sir? I would like to enter into the record that the first *Monty Python* reference was made at..." I looked at my watch. "...9:02 P.M., and was from the classic film *The Holy Grail*."

"Duly noted," Cal said, and looked at Shane. "You're unconscious."

"Okay," Shane said, grabbing a die. "I'm going to try to stabilize."

He looked into his fist, and said, "Help me, d20. You're my only hope."

"I would also like to enter into the record that the first *Star Wars* reference was made at 9:03 P.M." I said.

"I can't believe it took that long," Martin said.

"Use the Force, Shane," I said, and then it *really* got geeky...

This is what it's like whenever my friends and I get together. We enjoy each other's company just as much—if not more than—we enjoy adventuring, and it doesn't matter if we're two points away from a TPK or hitting natural 20s on all our rolls. We laugh, we give each other crap, we quote movies, and hope the session never ends.

It's not that we don't respect the game, or each other, and it's not that we *just* goof off. When it's time to actually roleplay, we get into our characters, and we tell some very cool stories together (I'm one of three writers in the group, so it gets pretty creative)... but that advice I was given so long ago has stuck with me. If playing the game ever got in the way of us having fun, we'd toss our sourcebooks out the window... provided, of course, I rolled better than a 4 on my ranged attack.